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ROBT BURNS & NANSE TINNOCK the HOSTESS at MAUCHLINE.

Tell yon guid bluid o' auld Bocconnocks,
I'll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,
An drink his health in' auld Nanse Tinnocks,
Nine times a-week.

Yde Earnest cry & pray'r

THE

WORKS

of

ROBERT BURNS

In

PROSE AND VERSE

FRIARS-CARSE HERMITAGE.

Thou whom Chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed;
Be thou deckt in silken stole;
Grave these counsels on thy Soul.

Baltimore, Published by E. Lucas jun. & I. Cushing 1816.

THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS;

WITH

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE,

AND

A CRITICISM ON HIS WRITINGS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHARACTER AND CONDITION OF

THE SCOTTISH PEASANTRY.

BALTIMORE,

PUBLISHED BY F. LUCAS, JUN. AND J. CUSHING.

G. Palmer, printer.

1816.

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TO

CAPTAIN GRAHAM MOORE,

OF

THE ROYAL NAVY.

WHEN you were stationed on our coast about twelve years ago, you first recommended to my particular notice the poems of the Ayrshire ploughman, whose works, published for the benefit of his widow and children, I now present to you. In a distant region of the world, whither the service of your country has carried you, you will, I know, receive with kindness this proof of my regard; not, perhaps, without some surprise on finding that I have been engaged in editing these volumes, nor without some curiosity to know how I was qualified for such an undertaking. These points I will briefly explain.

Having occasion to make an excursion to the county of Dumfries, in the summer of 1792, I had there an opportunity of seeing and of conversing with Burns. It has been my fortune to know some men of high reputation in literature, as well as in public life; but never to meet any one, who, in the course of a single interview, communicated to me so strong an impression of the force and versatility of his talents. After this I read the poems then published with greater interest and attention, and with a full conviction that, extraordinary as they are, they afford but an inadequate proof of the powers of their unfortunate author.

Four years afterwards Burns terminated his career. Among those whom the charms of his genius had attached to him, was one with whom I have been bound in the ties of friendship from early life—Mr. John Syme, of Ryedale. This gentleman, after the death of Burns, promoted with the utmost zeal a subscription for the support of the widow and children, to which their relief from immediate distress is to be ascribed; and in conjunction with other friends of this virtuous and destitute family, he projected the publication of these volumes for their benefit, by which the return of want might be prevented or prolonged.

To this last undertaking an editor and biographer was wanting, and Mr. Syme's modesty opposed a barrier to his assuming an office, for which he was in other respects peculiarly qualified. On this subject he consulted me; and, with the hope of surmounting his objections, I offered him my assistance, but in vain. Endeavours were used to procure an editor in other quarters without effect. The task was beset with considerable difficulties, and men of established reputation naturally declined an undertaking, to the performance of which, it was scarcely to be hoped, that general approbation could be obtained by any exertion of judgment or temper.

To such an office my place of residence, my accustomed studies, and my occupations, were certainly little suited; but the partiality of Mr. Syme thought me in other respects not unqualified; and his solicitations, joined to those of our excellent friend and relation Mrs. Dunlop, and of other friends of the family of the poet, I have not been able to resist. To remove difficulties which would otherwise have been insurmountable, Mr. Syme and Mr. Gilbert Burns made a journey to Liverpool, where they explained and arranged the manuscripts, and selected such as seemed worthy of the press. From this visit I derived a degree of pleasure which has compensated much of my labour. I had the satisfaction of renewing my personal intercourse with a much valued friend, and of forming an acquaintance with a man, closely allied to Burns in talents as well as in blood, in whose future fortunes the friends of virtue will not, I trust, be uninterested.

The publication of these volumes has been delayed by obstacles which these gentlemen could neither remove nor foresee, and which it would be tedious to enumerate. At length the task is finished. If the part which I have taken shall serve the interests of the family, and receive the approbation of good men, I shall have my recompense. The errors into which I have fallen, are not I hope very important, and they will be easily accounted for by those who know the circumstances under which this undertaking has been performed. Generous minds will receive the posthumous works of Burns with candour, and even partiality, as the remains of an unfortunate man of genius, published for the benefit of his family —as the stay of the widow and the hope of the fatherless.

To secure the suffrages of such minds, all topics are omitted in the writings, and avoided in the life of Burns, that have a tendency to awake the anti-

mosity of party. In perusing the following volumes no offence will be received, except by those to whom even the natural erect aspect of genius is offensive; characters that will scarcely be found among those who are educated to the profession of arms. Such men do not court situations of danger, or tread in the paths of glory. They will not be found in your service, which, in our own days, emulates on another element the superior fame of the Macedonian phalanx, or of the Roman legion, and which has lately made the shores of Europe and of Africa resound with the shouts of victory, from the Texel to the Tagus, and from the Tagus to the Nile!

The works of Burns will be received favourably by one who stands in the foremost rank of this noble service, and who deserves his station. On the land or on the sea, I know no man more capable of judging of the character or of the writings of this original genius. Homer, and Shakspeare, and Ossian, cannot always occupy your leisure. These volumes may sometimes engage your attention, while the steady breezes of the tropics swell your sails, and in another quarter of the earth charm you with the strains of nature, or awake in your memory the scenes of your early days. Suffer me to hope that they may sometimes recall to your mind the friend who addresses you, and who bids you—most affectionately—adieu!

J. CURRIE.

Liverpool, 1st May, 1800.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IF the editor has not mentioned by name the various persons who subscribed to the former edition, or who promoted the subscription for the support of the widow and children of Burns, this has arisen from his not being in possession of the necessary documents. Mr. Alexander Cunningham ought, however, to have been more particularly distinguished. He was indefatigably zealous in promoting the interest of the widow and her children, at a period when such services were highly important, and not a little difficult. The editor is happy in an opportunity of doing this justice, tardy and imperfect though it be, to an old friend, of the generous qualities of whose heart he retains a just and lasting impression.

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LIFE

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

THOUGH the dialect in which many of the happiest effusions of Robert Burns are composed be peculiar to Scotland, yet his reputation has extended itself beyond the limits of that country, and his poetry has been admired as the offspring of original genius by persons of taste in every part of the sister islands. The interest excited by his early death and the distress of his infant family, has been felt in a remarkable manner wherever his writings have been known; and these posthumous volumes, which give to the world his works complete, and which it is hoped may raise his widow and children from penury, are printed and published in England. It seems proper, therefore, to write the memoirs of his life, not with the view of their being read by Scotchmen only, but also by natives of England, and of other countries where the English language is spoken or understood.

Robert Burns was in reality what he has been represented to be, a Scottish peasant. To render the incidents of his humble story generally intelligible, it seems therefore advisable to prefix some observations on the character and situation of the order to which he belonged, a class of men distinguished by many peculiarities. By this means we shall form a more correct notion of the advantages with which he started, and of the obstacles which he surmounted. A few observations on the Scottish peasantry, will not perhaps be found unworthy of attention in other respects, and the subject is in a great measure new. Scotland has produced persons of high distinction in every branch of philosophy and literature, and her history, while a separate and independent nation, has been successfully explored. But the present character of the people was not then formed; the nation then presented features similar to those which the feudal system and the catholic religion had diffused over Europe, modified indeed by the peculiar nature of her territory and climate. The Reformation, by which such important changes were produced on the national character, was speedily followed by the accession of the Scottish monarchs to the English throne, and the period which elapsed from that accession to the Union has been rendered memorable, chiefly, by those bloody convulsions in which both divisions of the island were involved, and which in a considerable degree concealed from the eye of the historian, the domestic history of the people, and the gradual variations in their condition and manners. Since the Union, Scotland, though the seat of two unsuccessful attempts to restore the house of Stewart to the throne, has enjoyed a comparative tranquillity, and it is since this period that the present character of her peasantry has been in a great measure formed, though the political causes affecting it are to be traced to the previous acts of her separate legislature.

A slight acquaintance with the peasantry of Scotland will serve to convince an unprejudiced observer, that they possess a degree of intelligence not generally found among the same class of men in the other countries of Europe. In the very humblest condition of the Scottish peasants every one can read, and most persons are more or less skilled in writing and arithmetic; and under the disguise of their uncouth appearance, and of their peculiar manners and dialect, a stranger will discover that they possess a curiosity, and have obtained a degree of information corresponding to these acquirements.

These advantages they owe to the legal provision made by the parliament of Scotland, in 1646, for the establishment of a school in every parish throughout the kingdom, for the express purpose of educating the poor; a law which may chal-

lenge comparison with any act of legislation to be found in the records of history, whether we consider the wisdom of the ends in view, the simplicity of the means employed, or the provisions made to render these means effectual to their purpose. This excellent statute was repealed on the accession of Charles II. in 1660, together with all the other laws passed during the commonwealth, as not being sanctioned by the royal assent. It slept during the reigns of Charles and James, but was re-enacted precisely in the same terms, by the Scottish parliament, after the revolution in 1696; and this is the last provision on the subject. Its effects on the national character may be considered to have commenced about the period of the Union, and doubtless it co-operated with the peace and security arising from that happy event, in producing the extraordinary change in favour of industry and good morals, which the character of the common people of Scotland has since undergone. *See Appendix, No.* I. *Note* A.

The church-establishment of Scotland happily coincides with the institution just mentioned, which may be called its school-establishment. The clergyman being every where resident in his particular parish, becomes the natural patron and superintendant of the parish school, and is enabled in various ways to promote the comfort of the teacher and the proficiency of the scholars. The teacher himself is often a candidate for holy orders, who, during the long course of study and probation required in the Scottish church, renders the time which can be spared from his professional studies, useful to others as well as to himself, by assuming the respectable character of a school-master. It is common for the established schools even in the country parishes of Scotland, to enjoy the means of classical instruction, and many of the farmers, and some even of the cottagers, submit to much privation, that they may obtain for one of their sons at least, the precarious advantage of a learned education. The difficulty to be surmounted, arises indeed not from the expence of instructing their children, but from the charge of supporting them. In the country parish schools the English language, writing, and accounts, are generally taught at the rate of six shillings, and Latin, at the rate of ten or twelve shillings per annum. In the towns the prices are somewhat higher.

It would be improper in this place to inquire minutely into the degree of instruction received at these seminaries, or to attempt any precise estimate of its effects, either on the individuals who are the subjects of this instruction, or on the community to which they belong. That it is on the whole favourable to industry and morals, though doubtless with some individual exceptions, seems to be proved by the most striking and decisive appearance; and it is equally clear, that it is the cause of that spirit of emigration and of adventure so prevalent among the Scots. Knowledge has, by Lord Verulam, been denominated power; by others it has with less propriety been denominated virtue or happiness: we may with confidence consider it as motion. A human being, in proportion as he is informed, has his wishes enlarged, as well as the means of gratifying those wishes. He may be considered as taking within the sphere of his vision a larger portion of the globe on which we tread, and discovering advantage at a greater distance on its surface. His desires or ambition, once excited, are stimulated by his imagination, and distant and uncertain objects giving freer scope to the operation of this faculty, often acquire in the mind of the youthful adventurer an attraction from their very distance and uncertainty. If therefore a greater degree of instruction be given to the peasantry of a country comparatively poor, in the neighbourhood of other countries rich in natural and acquired advantages, and if the barriers be removed that kept them separate, emigration from the former to the latter will take place to a certain extent, by laws nearly as uniform as those by which heat diffuses itself among surrounding bodies, or water finds its level when left to its natural course. By the articles of the Union the barrier was broken down which divided the two British nations, and knowledge and poverty poured the adventurous natives of the north, over the fertile plains of England, and, more especially, over the colonies which she had settled in the east and in the west. The stream of population continues to flow from the north to the south; for the causes that originally impelled it continue to operate; and the richer country is constantly invigorated by the accession of an inormed and hardy race of men, educated in poverty, and prepared for hardship and danger, patient of labour, and prodigal of life. *See Appendix, No.* I. *Note* B.

The preachers of the reformation in Scotland were disciples of Calvin, and brought with them the temper as well as the tenets of that celebrated heresiarch. The presbyterian form of worship and of church government, was endeared to the people, from its being established by themselves. It was endeared to them also, by the struggle it had to maintain with the catholic and the protestant episcopal churches, over both of which, after a hundred years of fierce and sometimes bloody contention, it finally triumphed, receiving the countenance of government, and the sanction of law. During this long period of contention and of suffering, the temper of the people became more and more obstinate and bigotted, and the nation received that deep tinge of fanaticism which coloured their public transactions as well as their private virtues; and of which evident traces may be found in our own times. When the public schools were established, the instruction communicated in them, partook of the religious character of the people. The catechism of the Westminster divines was the universal school-book, and was put into the hands of the young peasant as soon as he had acquired a knowledge of his alphabet; and his first exercise in the art of reading introduced him to the most mysterious doctrines of the Christian faith. This practice is continued in our own times. After the Assembly's Catechism, the Proverbs of Solomon, and the New and Old Testament, follow in regular succession; and the scholar departs, gifted with the knowledge of the sacred writings, and receiving their doctrines ac-

cording to the interpretation of the Westminster confession of faith. Thus with the instruction of infancy in the schools of Scotland, are blended the dogmas of the national church; and hence the first and most constant exercise of ingenuity among the peasantry of Scotland, is displayed in religious disputation. With a strong attachment to the national creed, is conjoined a bigotted preference of certain forms of worship; the source of which would be often altogether obscure, if we did not recollect that the ceremonies of the Scottish church were framed in direct opposition, in every point, to those of the church of Rome.

The eccentricities of conduct, and singularities of opinion and manners, which characterized the English sectaries in the last century, afforded a subject for the comic muse of Butler, whose pictures lose their interest, since their archetypes are lost. Some of the peculiarities common among the more rigid disciples of Calvinism in Scotland, in the present times, have given scope to the ridicule of Burns, whose humour is equal to Butler's, and whose drawings from living manners are singularly expressive and exact. Unfortunately the correctness of his taste did not always correspond with the strength of his genius, and hence some of the most exquisite of his comic productions are rendered unfit for the light*.

The information and the religious education of the peasantry of Scotland promote sedateness of conduct, and habits of thought and reflection.—These good qualities are not counteracted by the establishment of poor-laws, which, while they reflect credit on the benevolence, detract from the wisdom of the English legislature. To make a legal provision for the inevitable distresses of the poor, who, by age or disease, are rendered incapable of labour, may indeed seem an indispensable duty of society; and if, in the execution of a plan for this purpose, a distinction could be introduced, so as to exclude from its benefits those whose sufferings are produced by idleness or profligacy, such an institution would perhaps be as rational as humane. But to lay a general tax on property for the support of poverty, from whatever cause proceeding, is a measure full of danger. It must operate in a considerable degree as an incitement to idleness, and a discouragement to industry. It takes away from vice and indolence the prospect of their most dreaded consequences, and from virtue and industry their peculiar sanctions. In many cases it must render the rise in the price of labour, not a blessing, but a curse to the labourer; who, if there be an excess in what he earns, beyond his immediate necessities, may be expected to devote this excess to his present gratification; trusting to the provision made by law for his own and his family's support, should disease suspend, or death terminate his labours. Happily, in Scotland, the same legislature which established a system of instruction for the poor, resisted the introduction of a legal provision for the support of poverty; what they granted on the one hand, and what they refused on the other, was equally favourable to industry and good morals; and hence it will not appear surprizing, if the Scottish peasantry have a more than usual share of prudence and reflection, if they approach nearer than persons of their order usually do, to the definition of a man, that of "a being that looks before and after." These observations must indeed be taken with many exceptions—the favourable operation of the causes just mentioned, is counteracted by others of an opposite tendency, and the subject, if fully examined, would lead to discussions of great extent.

When the reformation was established in Scotland, instrumental music was banished from the churches, as savouring too much of "profane minstrelsy." Instead of being regulated by an instrument, the voices of the congregation are led and directed by a person under the name of a precentor, and the people are all expected to join in the tune which he chooses for the psalm which is to be sung. Church-music is therefore a part of the education of the peasantry of Scotland, in which they are usually instructed in the long winter nights by the parish school-master, who is generally the precentor, or by itinerant teachers more celebrated for their powers of voice. This branch of education had, in the last reign, fallen into some neglect, but was revived about thirty or forty years ago, when the music itself was reformed and improved. The Scottish system of psalmody is, however, radically bad. Destitute of taste or harmony, it forms a striking contrast with the delicacy and pathos of the profane airs. Our poet, it will be found, was taught church-music, in which, however, he made little proficiency.

That dancing should also be very generally a part of the education of the Scottish peasantry, will surprize those who have only seen this description of men; and still more, those who reflect on the rigid spirit of Calvinism with which the nation is so deeply affected, and to which this recreation is strongly abhorrent. The winter is also the season when they aequire dancing, and indeed almost all their other instruction. They are taught to dance by persons, generally of their own number, many of whom work at daily labour during the summer months. The school is usually a barn, and the arena for the performers is generally a clay floor. The dome is lighted by candles stuck in one end of a cloven stick, the other end of which is thrust into the wall. Reels, strathspeys, country-dances, and hornpipes, are here practised. The jig, so much in favour among the English peasantry, has no place among them. The attachment of the people of Scotland of every rank, and particularly of the peasantry, to this amusement, is very great. After the labours of the day are over, young men and women walk many miles in the cold and dreary nights of winter, to these country dancing-schools; and the instant that the violin sounds a Scottish air, fatigue seems to vanish, the toil-bent rustic becomes erect, his features brighten with sympathy; every nerve seems to thrill with sensation, and every artery to vibrate with life. These rustic performers are

* *Holy Willie's Prayer; Rob the Rhymer's Welcome to his Bastard Child; Epistle to J. Goudie; The Holy Tulzie, &c.*

indeed less to be admired for grace, than for agility and animation, and their accurate observance of time. Their modes of dancing, as well as their tunes, are common to every rank in Scotland, and are now generally known. In our own day they have penetrated into England, and have established themselves even in the circle of royalty. In another generation they will be naturalized in every part of the island.

The prevalence of this taste, or rather passion for dancing, among a people so deeply tinctured with the spirit and doctrines of Calvin, is one of those contradictions which the philosophic observer so often finds in national character and manners. It is probably to be ascribed to the Scottish music, which, throughout all its varieties, is so full of sensibility, and which, in its livelier strains, awakes those vivid emotions, that find in dancing their natural solace and relief.

This triumph of the music of Scotland over the spirit of the established religion, has not, however, been obtained without long-continued and obstinate struggles. The numerous sectaries who dissent from the establishment on account of the relaxation which they perceive, or think they perceive, in the church, from her original doctrines and discipline, universally condemn the practice of dancing, and the schools where it is taught; and the more elderly and serious part of the people of every persuasion, tolerate rather than approve these meetings of the young of both sexes, where dancing is practised to their spirit-stirring music, where care is dispelled, toil is forgotten, and prudence itself is sometimes lulled to sleep.

The reformation, which proved fatal to the rise of the other fine arts in Scotland, probably impeded, but could not obstruct the progress of its music; a circumstance that will convince the impartial inquirer, that this music not only existed previously to that æra, but had taken a firm hold of the nation; thus affording a proof of its antiquity stronger than any produced by the researches of our antiquaries.

The impression which the Scottish music has made on the people, is deepened by its union with the national songs, of which various collections of unequal merit are before the public. These songs, like those of other nations, are many of them humorous, but they chiefly treat of love, war, and drinking. Love is the subject of the greater proportion. Without displaying the higher powers of the imagination, they exhibit a perfect knowledge of the human heart, and breathe a spirit of affection, and sometimes of delicate and romantic tenderness, not to be surpassed in modern poetry, and which the more polished strains of antiquity have seldom possessed.

The origin of this amatory character in the rustic muse of Scotland, or of the greater number of these love-songs themselves, it would be difficult to trace; they have accumulated in the silent lapse of time, and it is now perhaps impossible to give an arrangement of them in the order of their date, valuable as such a record of taste and manners would be. Their present influence on the character of the nation is, however, great and striking. To them we must attribute, in a great measure, the romantic passion which so often characterizes the attachments of the humblest of the people of Scotland, to a degree, that, if we mistake not, is seldom found in the same rank of society in other countries. The pictures of love and happiness exhibited in their rural songs, are early impressed on the mind of the peasant, and are rendered more attractive from the music with which they are united. They associate themselves with his own youthful emotions; they elevate the object as well as the nature of his attachment; and give to the impressions of sense, the beautiful colours of imagination. Hence in the course of his passion, a Scottish peasant often exerts a spirit of adventure, of which a Spanish cavalier need not be ashamed. After the labours of the day are over, he sets out for the habitation of his mistress, perhaps at many miles distance, regardless of the length or the dreariness of the way. He approaches her in secrecy, under the disguise of night. A signal at the door or window, perhaps agreed on, and understood by none but her, gives information of his arrival, and sometimes it is repeated again and again, before the capricious fair one will obey the summons. But if she favours his addresses, she escapes unobserved, and receives the vows of her lover under the gloom of twilight, or the deeper shade of night. Interviews of this kind are the subjects of many of the Scottish songs, some of the most beautiful of which Burns has imitated or improved. In the art which they celebrate he was perfectly skilled; he knew and had practised all its mysteries. Intercourse of this sort is, indeed, universal even in the humblest condition of man in every region of the earth. But it is not unnatural to suppose, that it may exist in a greater degree, and in a more romantic form, among the peasantry of a country who are supposed to be more than commonly instructed, who find in their rural songs, expression for their youthful emotions, and in whom the embers of passion are continually fanned by the breathings of a music full of tenderness and sensibility. The direct influence of physical causes on the attachment between the sexes, is comparatively small, but it is modified by moral causes beyond any other affection of the mind. Of these music and poetry are the chief. Among the snows of Lapland, and under the burning sun of Angola, the savage is seen hastening to his mistress, and every where he beguiles the weariness of his journey with poetry and song*.

In appreciating the happiness and virtue of a community, there is perhaps no single criterion on which so much dependence may be placed, as the state of the intercourse between the sexes. Where this displays ardour of attachment, accompanied by purity of conduct, the character and the influence of women rise in society, our imperfect nature mounts in the scale of moral excellence, and from the source of this single affection, a stream

* The North American Indians, among whom the attachment between the sexes is said to be weak, and love in the purer sense of the word unknown, seem nearly unacquainted with the charms of poetry and music. *See Weld's Tours.*

of felicity descends, which branches into a thousand rivulets that enrich and adorn the field of life. Where the attachment between the sexes sinks into an appetite, the heritage of our species is comparatively poor, and man approaches the condition of *the brutes that perish*. "If we could with safety indulge the pleasing supposition that Fingal lived, and that Ossian sung*," Scotland, judging from this criterion, might be considered as ranking high in happiness and virtue, in very remote ages. To appreciate her situation by the same criterion in our own times, would be a delicate and a difficult undertaking. After considering the probable influence of her popular songs, and her national music, and examining how far the effects to be expected from these are supported by facts, the inquirer would also have to examine the influence of other causes, and particularly of her civil and ecclesiastical institutions, by which the character, and even the manners of a people, though silently and slowly, are often powerfully controuled. In the point of view in which we are considering the subject, the ecclesiastical establishments of Scotland may be supposed peculiarly favourable to purity of conduct. The dissoluteness of manners among the catholic clergy, which preceded, and in some measure produced the reformation, led to an extraordinary strictness on the part of the reformers, and especially in that particular in which the licentiousness of the clergy had been carried to its greatest height—the intercourse between the sexes. On this point, as on all others connected with austerity of manners, the disciples of Calvin assumed a greater severity than those of the protestant episcopal church. The punishment of illicit connexion between the sexes, was, throughout all Europe, a province which the clergy assumed to themselves, and the church of Scotland, which at the reformation renounced so many powers and privileges, at that period took this crime under her more especial jurisdiction†. Where pregnancy takes place without marriage, the condition of the female causes the discovery, and it is on her, therefore, in the first instance, that the clergy and elders of the church exercise their zeal. After examination before the kirk-session, touching the circumstances of her guilt, she must endure a public penance, and sustain a public rebuke from the pulpit, for three sabbaths successively, in the face of the congregation to which she belongs, and thus have her weakness exposed, and her shame blazoned. The sentence is the same with respect to the male; but how much lighter the punishment! It is well known that this dreadful law, worthy of the iron minds of Calvin and of Knox, has often led to consequences, at the very mention of which human nature recoils!

While the punishment of incontinence prescribed by the institutions of Scotland is severe, the culprits have an obvious method of avoiding it, afforded them by the law respecting marriage, the validity of which requires neither the ceremonies of the church, nor any other ceremonies, but simply the deliberate acknowledgment of each other as husband and wife, made by the parties before witnesses, or in any other way that gives legal evidence of such an acknowledgment having taken place. And as the parties themselves fix the date of their marriage, an opportunity is thus given to avoid the punishment, and repair the consequences of illicit gratification. Such a degree of laxity respecting so serious a contract, might produce much confusion in the descent of property, without a still farther indulgence; but the law of Scotland legitimating all children born before wedlock, on the subsequent marriage of their parents, renders the actual date of the marriage itself, of little consequence*. Marriages contracted in Scotland without the ceremonies of the church, are considered as *irregular*, and the parties usually submit to a *rebuke* for their conduct in the face of their respective congregations, which is not, however, necessary to render the marriage valid. Burns, whose marriage, it will appear, was *irregular*, does not seem to have undergone this part of the discipline of the church.

Thus, though the institutions of Scotland are in many particulars favourable to a conduct among the peasantry founded on foresight and reflection, on the subject of marriage the reverse of this is true. Irregular marriages, it may be naturally supposed, are often improvident ones, in whatever rank of society they occur. The children of such marriages, poorly endowed by their parents, find a certain degree of instruction of easy acquisition; but the comforts of life, and the gratifications of ambition, they find of more difficult attainment in their native soil; and thus the marriage laws of Scotland conspire with other circumstances, to produce that habit of emigration, and spirit of adventure, for which the people are so remarkable.

The manners and appearance of the Scottish peasantry do not bespeak, to a stranger, the degree of their cultivation. In their own country, their industry is inferior to that of the same description of men in the southern division of the island. Industry and the useful arts reached Scotland later than England; and though their advance has been rapid there, the effects produced are as yet far inferior, both in reality and in appearance. The Scottish farmers have in general neither the opulence nor the comforts of those of England, neither vest the same capital in the soil, nor receive from it the same return. Their clothing, their food, and their habitations, are almost every where inferior†. Their appearance in these respects corresponds with the appearance of their country; and under the operation of patient industry, both are improving. Industry and the useful arts came later into Scotland than into England, because the security of property came later. With causes of internal agitation and warfare, similar

* Gibbon. † *See Appendix, No.* I. *Note* C.

* *See Appendix, No.* I. *Note* D.

† These remarks are confined to the class of farmers; the same corresponding inferiority will not be found in the condition of the cottagers and labourers, at least in the article of food, as those who examine this subject impartially will soon discover.

to those which occurred to the more southern nation, the people of Scotland were exposed to more imminent hazards, and more extensive and destructive spoliation, from external war. Occupied in the maintenance of their independence against their more powerful neighbours, to this were necessarily sacrificed the arts of peace, and at certain periods the flower of their population. And when the union of the crowns produced a security from national wars with England, for the century succeeding, the civil wars common to both divisions of the island, and the dependence, perhaps the necessary dependence, of the Scottish councils on those of the more powerful kingdom, counteracted this advantage. Even the union of the British nations was not, from obvious causes, immediately followed by all the benefits which it was ultimately destined to produce. At length, however, these benefits are distinctly felt, and generally acknowledged. Property is secure; manufactures and commerce increasing; and agriculture is rapidly improving in Scotland. As yet indeed the farmers are not in general enabled to make improvements out of their own capitals, as in England; but the land-holders, who have seen and felt the advantages resulting from them, contribute towards them with a liberal hand. Hence property as well as population is accumulating rapidly on the Scottish soil; and the nation, enjoying a great part of the blessings of Englishmen, and retaining several of their own happy institutions, might be considered, if confidence could be placed in human foresight, to be as yet only in an early stage of their progress. Yet there are obstructions in their way. To the cultivation of the soil, are opposed the extent and the strictness of the entails; to the improvement of the people, the rapidly increasing use of spirituous liquors, a detestable practice, which includes in its consequences almost every evil, physical and moral*. The peculiarly social disposition of the Scottish peasantry exposes them to this practice. This disposition, which is fostered by their national songs and music, is perhaps characteristic of the nation at large. Though the source of many pleasures, it counteracts by its consequences the effects of their patience, industry, and frugality, both at home and abroad, of which those especially who have witnessed the progress of Scotsmen in other countries, must have known many striking instances.

Since the Union, the manners and language of the people of Scotland have no longer a standard among themselves, but are tried by the standard of the nation to which they are united.—Though their habits are far from being flexible, yet it is evident that their manners and dialect are undergoing a rapid change. Even the farmers of the present day, appear to have less of the peculiarities of their country in their speech, than the men of letters of the last generation. Burns, who never left the island, nor penetrated farther into England than Carlisle on the one hand, or Newcastle on the other, had less of the Scottish dialect than Hume, who lived for many years in the best society of England and France; or perhaps than Robertson, who wrote the English language in a style of such purity; and if he had been in other respects fitted to take a lead in the British House of Commons, his pronunciation would neither have fettered his eloquence, nor deprived it of its due effect.

A striking particular in the character of the Scottish peasantry, is one which it is hoped will not be lost—the strength of their domestic attachments. The privations to which many parents submit for the good of their children, and particularly to obtain for them instruction, which they consider as the chief good, has already been noticed. If their children live and prosper, they have their certain reward, not merely as witnessing, but as sharing of their prosperity. Even in the humblest ranks of the peasantry, the earnings of the children may generally be considered as at the disposal of their parents; perhaps in no country, is so large a portion of the wages of labour applied to the support and comfort of those whose days of labour are past. A similar strength of attachment extends through all the domestic relations.

Our poet partook largely of this amiable characteristic of his humble compeers; he was also strongly tinctured with another striking feature which belongs to them, a partiality for his native country, of which many proofs may be found in his writings. This, it must be confessed, is a very strong and general sentiment among the natives of Scotland, differing however in its character, according to the character of the different minds in which it is found; in some appearing a selfish prejudice, in others a generous affection.

An attachment to the land of their birth, is indeed common to all men. It is found among the inhabitants of every region of the earth, from the arctic to the antarctic circle, in all the vast variety of climate, of surface, and of civilization. To analize this general sentiment, to trace it through the mazes of association up to the primary affection in which it has its source, would neither be a difficult nor an unpleasing labour. On a first consideration of the subject, we should perhaps expect to find this attachment strong in proportion to the physical advantages of the soil; but inquiry, far from confirming this supposition, seems rather to lead to an opposite conclusion.—In those fertile regions, where beneficent nature yields almost spontaneously whatever is necessary to human wants, patriotism, as well as every other generous sentiment, seems weak and languid. In countries less richly endowed, where the comforts, and even necessaries of life, must be purchased by patient toil, the affections of the mind, as well as the faculties of the understanding, improve under exertion, and patriotism flourishes amidst its kindred virtues. Where it is necessary to combine for mutual defence, as well as for the supply of

* The amount of the duty on spirits distilled in Scotland, is now upwards of 250,000*l.* annually. In 1777, it did not reach 8000*l.* The rate of the duty has indeed been raised, but, making every allowance, the increase of consumption must be enormous. This is independent of the duty on malt, &c., malt-liquor, imported spirits, and wine.

common wants, mutual good-will springs from mutual difficulties and labours, the social affections unfold themselves, and extend from the men with whom we live, to the soil on which we tread. It will perhaps be found, indeed, that our affections cannot be originally called forth but by objects capable, or supposed capable, of feeling our sentiments, and of returning them: but when once excited, they are strengthened by exercise, they are expanded by the powers of imagination, and seize more especially on those inanimate parts of creation, which form the theatre on which we have first felt the alternations of joy and sorrow, and first tasted the sweets of sympathy and regard. If this reasoning be just, the love of our country, although modified, and even extinguished in individuals by the chances and changes of life, may be presumed, in our general reasonings, to be strong among a people, in proportion to their social, and more especially to their domestic affections. In free governments it is found more active than in despotic ones, because, as the individual becomes of more consequence in the community, the community becomes of more consequence to him; in small states it is generally more active than in large ones, for the same reason, and also because the independence of a small community being maintained with difficulty, and frequently endangered, sentiments of patriotism are more frequently excited. In mountainous countries it is generally found more active than in plains, because there the necessities of life often require a closer union of the inhabitants; and more especially because in such countries, though less populous than plains, the inhabitants, instead of being scattered equally over the whole, are usually divided into small communities on the sides of their separate valleys, and on the banks of their respective streams; situations well calculated to call forth and to concentrate the social affections, amidst scenery that acts most powerfully on the sight, and makes a lasting impression on the memory. It may also be remarked, that mountainous countries are often peculiarly calculated to nourish sentiments of national pride and independence, from the influence of history on the affections of the mind. In such countries, from their natural strength, inferior nations have maintained their independence against their more powerful neighbours, and valour, in all ages, has made its most successful efforts against oppression. Such countries present the fields of battle, where the tide of invasion was rolled back, and where the ashes of those rest who have died in defence of their nation!

The operation of the various causes we have mentioned, is doubtless more general and more permanent, where the scenery of a country, the peculiar manners of its inhabitants, and the martial achievements of their ancestors, are embodied in national songs, and united to national music. By this combination the ties that attach men to the land of their birth, are multiplied and strengthened; and the images of infancy, strongly associating with the generous affections, resist the influence of time, and of new impressions; they often survive in countries far distant, and amidst far different scenes, to the latest periods of life, to soothe the heart with the pleasures of memory, when those of hope die away.

If this reasoning be just, it will explain to us why, among the natives of Scotland, even of cultivated minds, we so generally find a partial attachment to the land of their birth, and why this is so strongly discoverable in the writings of Burns, who joined to the higher powers of the understanding, the most ardent affections. Let not men of reflection think it a superfluous labour to trace the rise and progress of a character like his. Born in the condition of a peasant, he rose by the force of his mind into distinction and influence, and in his works has exhibited what are so rarely found, the charms of original genius. With a deep insight into the human heart, his poetry exhibits high powers of imagination; it displays, and as it were embalms, the peculiar manners of his country; and it may be considered as a monument not to his own name only, but to the expiring genius of an ancient and once independent nation. In relating the incidents of his life, candour will prevent us from dwelling invidiously on those failings which justice forbids us to conceal; we will tread lightly over his yet warm ashes, and respect the laurels that shelter his untimely grave.

LIFE

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS was, as is well known, the son of a farmer in Ayrshire, and afterwards himself a farmer there; but having been unsuccessful, he was about to emigrate to Jamaica. He had previously, however, attracted some notice by his poetical talents in the vicinity where he lived, and having published a small volume of his poems at Kilmarnock, this drew upon him more general attention. In consequence of the encouragement he received, he repaired to Edinburgh, and there published by subscription an improved and enlarged edition of his poems, which met with extraordinary success. By the profits arising from the sale of this edition, he was enabled to enter on a farm in Dumfries-shire; and having married a person to whom he had been long attached, he retired, to devote the remainder of his life to agriculture. He was again, however, unsuccessful, and, abandoning his farm, he removed into the town of Dumfries, where he filled an inferior office in the excise, and where he terminated his life in July, 1796, in his thirty-eighth year.

The strength and originality of his genius procured him the notice of many persons distinguished in the republic of letters, and among others, that of Dr. Moore, well known for his *Views of Society and Manners on the Continent of Europe*, for his *Zeluco*, and various other works. To this gentleman our poet addressed a letter, after his first visit to Edinburgh, giving a history of his life, up to the period of his writing. In a composition never intended to see the light, elegance or perfect correctness of composition will not be expected. These, however, will be compensated by the opportunity of seeing our poet, as he gives the incidents of his life, unfold the peculiarities of his character, with all the careless vigour and open sincerity of his mind.

" *Mauchline*, 2*d August*, 1787.

" Sir,

" For some months past I have been rambling over the country, but I am now confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself. My name has made some little noise in this country; you have done me the honour to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative, though I know it will be often at my own expense; for I assure you, sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, excepting in the trifling affair of *wisdom*, I sometimes think I resemble, I have, I say, like him *turned my eyes to behold madness and folly*, and like him too, frequently shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. * * * After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you, that the poor author wrote them under some twitching qualms of conscience, arising from a suspicion that he was doing what he ought not to do; a predicament he has more than once been in before.

" I have not the most distant pretensions to assume that character which the pye-coated guardians of escutcheons call a gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted in the herald's office, and looking through that granary of honours, I there found almost every name of the kingdom; but for me,

' My ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept thro' scoundrels ever since the flood.'

Gules, purpure, argent, &c. quite disowned me.

" My father was of the north of Scotland, the son of a farmer, and was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large; where, after many years wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom.—I have met with few who understood *men*, *their manners*, *and their ways*, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently I was born a very poor man's son. For the first six or seven years of my life, my father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr. Had he continued in that station, I must have marched off to be one of the little underlings about a farm-house; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye, till they

could discern between good and evil; so with the assistance of his generous master, my father ventured on a small farm on his estate. At those years I was by no means a favourite with any body. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic ideot* piety.—I say *ideot* piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days too, I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that, to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was *The Vision of Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning, *How are thy Servants blest, O Lord!* I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ear—

> ' For though on dreadful whirls we hung
> High on the broken wave.—"

I met with these pieces in *Mason's English Collection*, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were, *The Life of Hannibal*, and *The History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there, till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.

" Polemical divinity about this time was putting the country half mad, and I, ambitious of shining in conversation parties on Sundays, between sermons, at funerals, &c., used, a few years afterwards, to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised a hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour.

" My vicinity to Ayr was of some advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modifications of spited pride, was, like our catechism definition of infinitude, *without bounds or limits*. I formed several connexions with other younkers who possessed superior advantages; the *youngling* actors who were busy in the rehearsal of parts in which they were shortly to appear on the stage of life, where, alas! I was destined to drudge behind the scenes. It is not commonly at this green age, that our young gentry have a just sense of the immense distance between them and their ragged play-fellows. It takes a few dashes into the world, to give the young great man that proper, decent, unnoticing disregard for the poor, insignificant stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry around him, who were perhaps born in the same village. My young superiors never insulted the *clouterly* appearance of my plough-boy carcase, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books; among them, even then, I could pick up some observations, and one, whose heart I am sure not even the *Munny Begum* scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these my young friends and benefactors, as they occasionally went off for the East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction, but I was soon called to more serious evils. My father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and to clench the misfortune, we fell into the hands of a factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my *Tale of Twa Dogs*. My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardships, was unfit for labour. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more, and to weather these two years, we retrenched our expenses. We lived very poorly: I was a dexterous ploughman for my age; and the next eldest to me was a brother (Gilbert), who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash the corn. A novel-writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I; my indignation yet boils at the recollection of the s——l factor's insolent threatening letters, which used to set us all in tears.

" This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing moil of a galley-slave, brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labours of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language, but you know the Scottish idiom; she was a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass*. In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion I cannot tell; you medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c., but I never expressly said I loved her.—Indeed I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little

* Ideot for ideotic.

band to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sung sweetly; and it was her favourite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for excepting that he could smear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the moor-lands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself*.

"Thus with me began love and poetry; which at times have been my only, and till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment. My father struggled on till he reached the freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain he made, was such as to throw a little ready money into his hands at the commencement of his lease, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here; but a difference commencing between him and his landlord as to terms, after three years tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a jail, by a consumption, which, after two years promises, kindly stepped in, and carried him away, to *where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest!*

"It is during the time that we lived on this farm, that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly awkward boy in the parish—no *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. What I knew of ancient story was gathered from *Salmon's* and *Guthrie's* geographical grammars; and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature, and criticism, I got from the *Spectator*. These, with *Pope's Works*, some plays of *Shakespeare*, *Tull and Dickson on Agriculture*, *The Pantheon*, *Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*, *Stackhouse's History of the Bible*, *Justice's British Gardener's Directory*, *Bayle's Lectures*, *Allan Ramsay's Works*, *Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, *A Select Collection of English Songs*, and *Hervey's Meditations*, had formed the whole of my reading. The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the true tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice, much of my critic-craft, such as it is.

"In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school.—My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings, and my going was what to this moment I repent, in opposition to his wishes. My father, as I said before, was subject to strong passions; from that instance of disobedience in me, he took a sort of dislike to me, which I believe was one cause of the dissipation which marked my succeeding years. I say dissipation, comparatively with the strictness, and sobriety, and regularity of presbyterian country life; for though the will-o-wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue kept me for several years afterwards within the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was to want an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune, was the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture I never could squeeze myself into it—the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance! Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity, as from a pride of observation and remark; a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly solitude; add to these incentives to social life, my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense, and it will not seem surprizing that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited, or any great wonder that always where two or three met together, there was I among them. But far beyond all other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain*. My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and as in every other warfare in this world, my fortune was various; sometimes I was received with favour, and sometimes I was mortified with a repulse. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and thus I set absolute want at defiance; and as I never cared farther for my labours than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evenings in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on a love-adventure without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity, that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions; and I dare say, I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of the parish of Tarbolton, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe.—The very goose-feather in my hand seems to know instinctively the well-worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song; and it is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the love-adventures of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house and cottage; but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice, baptize these things by the name of Follies. To the sons and daughters of labour and poverty they are matters of the most serious nature; to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewel, are the greatest and most delicious parts of their enjoyments.

"Another circumstance in my life which made some alteration in my mind and manners, was, that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted

* *See Appendix, No.* II. *Note* A.

school, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me, but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry; till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my *sines* and *co-sines* for a few days more; but stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel

> 'Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower—'

"It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless.

"I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works; I had seen human nature in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. This improved me in composition. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents, flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three farthings worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

"My life flowed on much in the same course till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; *Sterne* and *M'Kenzie—Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling* were my bosom favourites. Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind, but it was only indulged in according to the humour of the hour. I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed the work as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once lighted up, raged like so many devils, till they got vent in rhyme; and then the conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except *Winter, a Dirge**, the eldest of my printed pieces; *The Death of poor Maillie**, *John Barleycorn**, and songs first, second, and third*. Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the foremention school-business.

"My twenty-third year was to me an important æra. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined a flax-dresser in a neighbouring town (Irvin) to learn his trade. This was an unlucky affair. My * * * and to finish the whole, as we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year, the shop took fire and burnt to ashes, and I was left like a true poet, not worth a sixpence.

"I was obliged to give up this scheme; the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head; and, what was worst of all, he was visibly far gone in a consumption; and to crown my distresses, a *belle fille*, whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the field of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that, for three months, I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—*depart from me, ye cursed.*

"From this adventure I learned something of a town life; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn, was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a simple mechanic; but a great man in the neighbourhood taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying just as he was ready to launch out into the world, the poor fellow in despair went to sea; where, after a variety of good and ill fortune, a little before I was acquainted with him, he had been set on shore, by an American privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stripped of every thing. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding, that he is at this time master of a large West-Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

"His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and of course strove to imitate him. In some measure I succeeded; I had pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw, who was a greater fool than myself, where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief, and the consequence was, that soon after I resumed the plough, I wrote the *Poet's Welcome*†. My reading only increased while in this town by two stray volumes of *Pamela*, and one of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, ex-

* *See Poems.*

† *Rob the Rhymer's Welcome to his Bastard Child:*

cept some religious pieces that are in print, I had given up; but meeting with *Fergusson's Scottish Poems*, I strung anew my wildly-sounding lyre with emulating vigour. When my father died, his all went among the hell-hounds that growl in the kennel of justice; but we made a shift to collect a little money in the family amongst us, with which, to keep us together, my brother and I took a neighbouring farm. My brother wanted my hair-brained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness; but in good sense, and every sober qualification, he was far my superior.

"I entered on this farm with a full resolution, *come, go to, I will be wise!* I read farming-books; I calculated crops; I attended markets; and, in short, in spite of *the devil, and the world, and the flesh*, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned *like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire**.

"I now began to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light, was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my *Holy Fair*. I had a notion myself, that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause. *Holy Willie's Prayer* next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held several meetings, to look over their spiritual artillery, if haply any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my wanderings led me on another side, within point blank shot of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story that gave rise to my printed poem, *The Lament*. This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning of Rationality†. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; in truth it was only nominally mine; and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. But, before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power; I thought they had merit; and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver—or perhaps a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits! I can truly say that, *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and of my works as I have at this moment, when the public has decided in their favour. It ever was my opinion, that the mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance of themselves.—To know myself had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet: I studied assiduously nature's design in my formation; where the lights and shades of my character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but, at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West-Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty.—My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; and besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself, for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde, for,

'Hungry ruin had me in the wind.'

"I had been for some days skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia, *The gloomy night is gathering fast**, when a letter from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine, overthrew all my schemes, by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition†. The doctor belonged to a set of critics, for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion, that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition, fired me so much, that away I posted for that city, without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence in my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir; and a kind providence placed me under the patronage of one of the noblest of men, the earl of Glencairn. *Oublie-moi, grand Dieu, si jamais je l' oublie!*

"I need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to *catch* the characters and *the manners living as they rise*. Whether I have profited, time will show.

* * * * *

"My most respectful compliments to Miss W. Her very elegant and friendly letter I cannot an-

* *See Appendix, No.* II. *Note* B.

† An explanation of this will be found hereafter.

* *See Poems.* † *See General Correspondence, No.* 7.

swer at present, as my presence is requisite in Edinburgh, and I set out to-morrow*."

At the period of our poet's death, his brother, Gilbert Burns, was ignorant that he had himself written the foregoing narrative of his life while in Ayrshire; and having been applied to by Mrs. Dunlop for some memoirs of his brother, he complied with her request in a letter, from which the following narrative is chiefly extracted. When Gilbert Burns afterwards saw the letter of our poet to Dr. Moore, he made some annotations upon it, which shall be noticed as we proceed.

Robert Burns was born on the 25th day of January, 1759, in a small house, about two miles from the town of Ayr, and within a few hundred yards of Alloway church, which his poem of *Tam o'Shanter* has rendered immortal†. The name which the poet and his brother modernized into Burns, was originally Burnes or Burness. Their father, William Burnes, was the son of a farmer in Kincardineshire, and had received the education common in Scotland to persons in his condition of life; he could read and write, and had some knowledge of arithmetic. His family having fallen into reduced circumstances, he was compelled to leave his home in his nineteenth year, and turned his steps towards the south, in quest of a livelihood. The same necessity attended his elder brother Robert. "I have often heard my father," says Gilbert Burns, in his letter to Mrs. Dunlop, "describe the anguish of mind he felt when they parted on the top of a hill, on the confines of their native place, each going off his several way in search of new adventures, and scarcely knowing whither he went. My father undertook to act as a gardener, and shaped his course to Edinburgh, where he wrought hard when he could get work, passing through a variety of difficulties. Still, however, he endeavoured to spare something for the support of his aged parent, and I recollect hearing him mention his having sent a bank-note for this purpose, when money of that kind was so scarce in Kincardineshire, that they scarcely knew how to employ it when it arrived." From Edinburgh, William Burnes passed westward into the county of Ayr, where he engaged himself as a gardener to the laird of Fairly, with whom he lived two years, then changing his service for that of Crawford of Doonside. At length being desirous of settling in life, he took a perpetual lease of seven acres of land from Dr. Campbell, physician in Ayr, with the view of commencing nursery-man and public gardener; and having built a house upon it with his own hands, married, in December, 1757, Agnes Brown, the mother of our poet, who still survives. The first fruit of this marriage was Robert, the subject of these memoirs, born on the 25th of January, 1759, as has already been mentioned. Before William Burnes had made much progress in preparing his nursery, he was withdrawn from that undertaking by Mr. Ferguson, who purchased the estate of Doonholm, in the immediate neighbourhood, and engaged him as his gardener and overseer; and this was his situation when our poet was born. Though in the service of Mr. Ferguson, he lived in his own house, his wife managing her family and her little dairy, which consisted sometimes of two, sometimes of three milch cows; and this state of unambitious content continued till the year 1766. His son Robert was sent by him in his sixth year to a school at Alloway Miln, about a mile distant, taught by a person of the name of Campbell; but this teacher being in a few months appointed master of the work-house at Ayr, William Burnes, in conjunction with some other heads of families, engaged John Murdoch in his stead. The education of our poet, and of his brother Gilbert, was in common, and of their proficiency under Mr. Murdoch, we have the following account: "With him we learnt to read English tolerably well*, and to write a little. He taught us too the English grammar. I was too young to profit much from his lessons in grammar, but Robert made some proficiency in it, a circumstance of considerable weight in the unfolding of his genius and character; as he soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement; for even then he was a reader when he could get a book. Murdoch, whose library at that time had no great variety in it, lent him *The Life of Hannibal*, which was the first book he read (the school-books excepted), and almost the only one he had an opportunity of reading while he was at school; for *The Life of Wallace*, which he classes with it in one of his letters to you, he did not see for some years afterwards, when he borrowed it from the blacksmith who shod our horses."

It appears that William Burnes approved himself greatly in the service of Mr. Ferguson, by his intelligence, industry, and integrity. In consequence of this, with a view of promoting his interest, Mr. Ferguson leased him a farm, of which we have the following account.

"The farm was upwards of seventy acres† (between eighty and ninety English statute measure), the rent of which was to be forty pounds annually, for the first six years, and afterwards forty-five pounds. My father endeavoured to sell his leasehold property, for the purpose of stock-

* There are various copies of this letter, in the author's hand-writing; and one of these, evidently corrected, is in the book in which he had copied several of his letters. This has been used for the press, with some omissions, and one slight alteration suggested by Gilbert Burns.

† This house is on the right hand side of the road from Ayr to May-bole, which forms a part of the road from Glasgow to Port-Patrick. When the poet's father afterwards removed to Tarbolton parish, he sold his lease-hold right in this house and a few acres of land adjoining, to the corporation of shoe-makers in Ayr. It is now a country ale-house.

* Letter from Gilbert Burns to Mrs. Dunlop.

† Letter of Gilbert Burns to Mrs. Dunlop. The name of this farm is Mount Oliphant, in Ayr parish.

ing this farm, but at that time was unable, and Mr. Ferguson lent him a hundred pounds for that purpose. He removed to his new situation at Whitsuntide, 1766. It was, I think, not above two years after this, that Murdoch, our tutor and friend, left this part of the country, and there being no school near us, and our little services being useful on the farm, my father undertook to teach us arithmetic in the winter evenings, by candle-light, and in this way my two elder sisters got all the education they received. I remember a circumstance that happened at this time, which, though trifling in itself, is fresh in my memory, and may serve to illustrate the character of my brother. Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us, as a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English grammar, and the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*, and, by way of passing the evening, he began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party was dissolved in tears. A female in the play (I have but a confused remembrance of it) had her hands chopt off, and her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we with one voice desired he would read no more. My father observed, that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us. Robert replied, that if it was left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor's kindness; but Murdoch interfered, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left *The School for Love*, a comedy (translated I think from the French), in its place*."

"Nothing," continues Gilbert Burns, "could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we rarely saw any body but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighbourhood. Indeed the greatest part of the land in the vicinity, was at that time possessed by shopkeepers, and people of that stamp, who had retired from business, or who kept their farm in the country, at the same time that they followed business in town. My father was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us as if we had been men, and was at great pains while we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm us in virtuous habits. He borrowed *Salmon's Geographical Grammar* for us, and endeavoured to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world; while from a book-society in Ayr, he procured for us the reading of *Derham's Physico and Astro-Theology*, and *Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation*, to give us some idea of astronomy and natural history. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to *Stackhouse's History of the Bible*, then lately published by James Meuros in Kilmarnock; from this Robert collected a competent knowledge of ancient history; for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches. A brother of my mother, who had lived with us some time, and had learnt some arithmetic by our winter evening's candle, went into a bookseller's shop in Ayr, to purchase *The Ready Reckoner*, or *Tradesman's sure Guide*, and a book to teach him to write letters. Luckily, in the place of *The Complete Letter Writer*, he got by mistake a small collection of letters by the most eminent writers, with a few sensible directions for attaining an easy epistolary style. This book was to Robert of the greatest consequence. It inspired him with a strong desire to excel in letter-writing, while it furnished him with models by some of the first writers in our language.

"My brother was about thirteen or fourteen, when my father, regretting that we wrote so ill, sent us week about, during a summer quarter, to the parish school of Dalrymple, which, though between two and three miles distant, was the nearest to us, that we might have an opportunity of remedying this defect. About this time a bookish acquaintance of my father's procured us a reading of two volumes of Richardson's *Pamela*, which was the first novel we read, and the only part of Richardson's works my brother was acquainted with till towards the period of his commencing author. Till that time too he remained unacquainted with Fielding, with Smollet (two volumes of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and two volumes of *Peregrine Pickle* excepted), with Hume, with Robertson, and almost all our authors of eminence of the latter times. I recollect, indeed, my father borrowed a volume of English history from Mr. Hamilton of Bourtreehill's gardener. It treated of the reign of James the first, and his unfortunate son Charles, but I do not know who was the author; all that I remember of it is something of Charles's conversation with his children. About this time Murdoch, our former teacher, after having been in different places in

* It is to be remembered that the poet was only nine years of age, and the relator of this incident under eight, at the time it happened. The effect was very natural in children of sensibility at their age. At a more mature period of the judgment, such absurd representations are calculated rather to produce disgust or laughter, than tears. The scene to which Gilbert Burns alludes, opens thus:

Titus Andronicus, Act II, Scene 5.

Enter Demetrius *and* Chiron, *with* Lavinia *ravished, her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out.*

Why is this silly play still printed as Shakespeare's, against the opinion of all the best critics? The bard of Avon was guilty of many extravagancies, but he always performed what he intended to perform. That he ever excited in a British mind (for the French critics must be set aside) disgust or ridicule, where he meant to have awakened pity or horror, is what will not be imputed to that master of the passions. E.

the country, and having taught a school some time in Dumfries, came to be the established teacher of the English language in Ayr, a circumstance of considerable consequence to us. The remembrance of my father's former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do every thing in his power for our improvement. He sent us Pope's works, and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading, excepting what is contained in *The English Collection*, and in the volume of *The Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772; excepting also those *excellent new songs* that are hawked about the country in baskets, or exposed on stalls in the streets.

"The summer after we had been at Dalrymple school, my father sent Robert to Ayr to revise his English grammar, with his former teacher. He had been there only one week, when he was obliged to return, to assist at the harvest. When the harvest was over he went back to school, where he remained two weeks; and this completes the account of his school education, excepting one summer quarter some time afterwards, that he attended the parish school of Kirk-Oswalds (where he lived with a brother of my mother's) to learn surveying.

"During the two last weeks that he was with Murdoch, he himself was engaged in learning French, and he communicated the instructions he received to my brother, who, when he returned, brought home with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he had acquired such a knowledge of the language, as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy, and, through the medium of Murdoch, procured him the acquaintance of several lads in Ayr, who were at that time gabbling French, and the notice of some families, particularly that of Dr. Malcolm, where a knowledge of French was a recommendation.

"Observing the facility with which he had acquired the French language, Mr. Robinson, the established writing-master in Ayr, and Mr. Murdoch's particular friend, having himself acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin language by his own industry, without ever having learnt it at school, advised Robert to make the same attempt, promising him every assistance in his power. Agreeably to this advice, he purchased *The Rudiments of the Latin Tongue*, but finding this study dry and uninteresting, it was quickly laid aside. He frequently returned to his *Rudiments* on any little chagrin or disappointment, particularly in his love affairs; but the Latin seldom predominated more than a day or two at a time, or a week at most. Observing himself the ridicule that would attach to this sort of conduct if it were known, he made two or three humorous stanzas on the subject, which I cannot now recollect, but they all ended,

'*So I'll to my Latin again.*'

"Thus you see Mr. Murdoch was a principal means of my brother's improvement. Worthy man! though foreign to my present purpose, I cannot take leave of him without tracing his future history. He continued for some years a respected and useful teacher at Ayr, till one evening that he had been overtaken in liquor, he happened to speak somewhat disrespectfully of Dr. Dalrymple, the parish minister, who had not paid him that attention to which he thought himself entitled. In Ayr he might as well have spoken blasphemy. He found it proper to give up his appointment. He went to London, where he still lives, a private teacher of French. He has been a considerable time married, and keeps a shop of stationary wares.

"The father of Dr. Paterson, now physician at Ayr, was I believe a native of Aberdeenshire, and was one of the established teachers in Ayr when my father settled in the neighbourhood. He early recognised my father as a fellow native of the north of Scotland, and a certain degree of intimacy subsisted between them during Mr. Paterson's life. After his death, his widow, who is a very genteel woman, and of great worth, delighted in doing what she thought her husband would have wished to have done, and assiduously kept up her attentions to all his acquaintance. She kept alive the intimacy with our family, by frequently inviting my father and mother to her house on Sundays, when she met them at church.

"When she came to know my brother's passion for books, she kindly offered us the use of her husband's library, and from her we got the *Spectator*, *Pope's Translation of Homer*, and several other books that were of use to us. Mount Oliphant, the farm my father possessed in the parish of Ayr, is almost the very poorest soil I know of in a state of cultivation. A stronger proof of this I cannot give, than that, notwithstanding the extraordinary rise in the value of lands in Scotland, it was, after a considerable sum laid out in improving it by the proprietor, let, a few years ago, five pounds per annum lower, than the rent paid for it by my father thirty years ago. My father in consequence of this soon came into difficulties, which were increased by the loss of several of his cattle by accidents and disease.—To the buffetings of misfortune, we could only oppose hard labour and the most rigid economy. We lived very sparingly. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house, while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labours of the farm. My brother at the age of thirteen assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. To think of our father growing old (for he was now above fifty), broken down with the long continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances, these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life, was in a great measure the cause of that depres-

sion of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull head-ache, which at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed, in the night time.

"By a stipulation in my father's lease, he had a right to throw it up, if he thought proper, at the end of every sixth year. He attempted to fix himself in a bett r farm at the end of the first six years, but, failing in that attempt, he continued where he was for six years more. He then took the farm of Lochlea, of 130 acres, at the rent of twenty shillings an acre, in the parish of Tarbolton, of Mr. —— —— then a merchant in Ayr, and now (1797) a merchant in Liverpool. He removed to this farm at Whitsunday, 1777, and possessed it only seven years. No writing had ever been made out of the conditions of the lease, a misunderstanding took place respecting them; the subjects in dispute were submitted to arbitration, and the decision involved my father's affairs in ruin. He lived to know of this decision, but not to see any execution in consequence of it. He died on the 13th of February, 1784.

"The seven years we lived in Tarbolton parish (extending from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth of my brother's age), were not marked by much literary improvement; but, during this time, the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character, which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though when young he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet, when he approached manhood, his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never, indeed, knew that he *fainted, sunk, and died away*, but the agitations of his mind and body, exceeded any thing of the kind I ever knew in real life. He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life. His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms, out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination, and there was often a great dissimilitude between his fair captivator, as she appeared to others, and as she seemed when invested with the attributes he gave her. One generally reigned paramount in his affections; but as Yorick's affections flowed out towards Madam de L— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was frequently encountering other attractions, which formed so many underplots in the drama of his love. As these connexions were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty (from which he never deviated till he reached his 23d year), he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely to be soon the case, while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he had no probability of being master of for a great while. He began, therefore, to think of trying some other line of life. He and I had for several years taken land of my father, for the purpose of raising flax on our own account. In the course of selling it, Robert began to think of turning flax-dresser, both as being suitable to his grand view of settling in life, and as subservient to the flax raising. He accordingly wrought at the business of a flax-dresser in Irvine for six months, but abandoned it at that period, as neither agreeing with his health nor inclination. In Irvine he had contracted some acquaintance, of a freer manner of thinking and living than he had been used to, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue, which had hitherto restrained him. Towards the end of the period under review (in his 24th year), and soon after his father's death, he was furnished with the subject of his epistle to John Rankin. During this period, also, he became a free-mason, which was his first introduction to the life of a boon-companion. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, and the praise he has bestowed on Scotch drink (which seems to have misled his historians), I do not recollect, during these seven years, nor till towards the end of his commencing author (when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company), to have ever seen him intoxicated, nor was he at all given to drinking. A stronger proof of the general sobriety of his conduct need not be required, than what I am about to give. During the whole of the time we lived in the farm of Lochlea with my father, he allowed my brother and me such wages for our labour, as he gave to other labourers, as a part of which, every article of our clothing manufactured in the family was regularly accounted for. When my father's affairs drew near a crisis, Robert and I took the farm of Mossgiel, consisting of 118 acres, at the rent of 90*l.* per annum (the farm on which I live at present), from Mr. Gavin Hamilton, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern among us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labour he performed on the farm. My brother's allowance and mine was seven pounds per annum each. And, during the whole time this family concern lasted, which was four years, as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income. As I was intrusted with the keeping of the family accounts, it is not possible that there can be any fallacy in this statement, in my brother's favour. His temperance and frugality were every thing that could be wished.

"The farm of Mossgiel lies very high, and mostly on a cold wet bottom. The first four years that we were on the farm were very frosty, and the spring was very late. Our crops in consequence were very unprofitable, and notwithstanding our utmost diligence and economy, we found ourselves obliged to give up our bargain, with the loss of a considerable part of our original

stock. It was during these four years, that Robert formed his connexion with Jean Armour, afterwards Mrs. Burns. This connexion *could no longer be concealed*, about the time we came to a final determination to quit the farm. Robert durst not engage with a family in his poor unsettled state, but was anxious to shield his partner by every means in his power from the consequences of their imprudence. It was agreed, therefore, between them, that they should make a legal acknowledgment of an irregular and private marriage, that he should go to Jamaica to *push his fortune*, and that she should remain with her father till it might please Providence to put the means of supporting a family in his power.

" Mrs. Burns was a great favourite of her father's. The intimation of a marriage was the first suggestion he received of her real situation. He was in the greatest distress, and fainted away. The marriage did not appear to him to make the matter any better. A husband in Jamaica appeared to him and to his wife little better than none, and an effectual bar to any other prospects of a settlement in life that their daughter might have. They, therefore, expressed a wish to her, that the written papers which respected the marriage should be cancelled, and thus the marriage rendered void. In her melancholy state, she felt the deepest remorse at having brought such heavy affliction on parents that loved her so tenderly, and submitted to their entreaties. Their wish was mentioned to Robert. He felt the deepest anguish of mind. He offered to stay at home, and provide for his wife and family in the best manner that his daily labours could provide for them; that being the only means in his power. Even this offer they did not approve of; for humble as Miss Armour's station was, and great though her imprudence had been, she still, in the eyes of her partial parents, might look to a better connexion than that with my friendless and unhappy brother, at that time without house or biding-place. Robert at length consented to their wishes, but his feelings on this occasion were of the most distracting nature, and the impression of sorrow was not effaced, till by a regular marriage they were indissolubly united. In the state of mind which this separation produced, he wished to leave the country as soon as possible, and agreed with Dr. Douglas to go out to Jamaica, as an assistant overseer, or, as I believe it is called, a book-keeper, on his estate. As he had not sufficient money to pay his passage, and the vessel in which Dr. Douglas was to procure a passage for him was not expected to sail for some time, Mr. Hamilton advised him to publish his poems in the mean time by subscription, as a likely way of getting a little money to provide him more liberally in necessaries for Jamaica. Agreeably to this advice, subscription bills were printed immediately, and the printing was commenced at Kilmarnock, his preparations going on at the same time for his voyage. The reception, however, which his poems met with in the world, and the friends they procured him, made him change his resolution of going to Jamaica, and he was advised to go to Edinburgh to publish a second edition. On his return, in happier circumstances, he renewed his connexion with Mrs. Burns, and rendered it permanent by an union for life.

" Thus, Madam, have I endeavoured to give you a simple narrative of the leading circumstances in my brother's early life. The remaining part he spent in Edinburgh, or in Dumfries-shire, and its incidents are as well known to you as to me. His genius having procured him your patronage and friendship, this gave rise to the correspondence between you, in which I believe his sentiments were delivered with the most respectful, but most unreserved confidence, and which only terminated with the last days of his life."

This narrative of Gilbert Burns may serve as a commentary on the preceding sketch of our poet's life by himself. It will be seen, that the distraction of mind which he mentions (*p.* 13), arose from the distress and sorrow in which he had involved his future wife.—The whole circumstances attending this connexion are certainly of a very singular nature*.

The reader will perceive, from the foregoing narrative, how much the children of William Burnes were indebted to their father, who was certainly a man of uncommon talents; though it does not appear that he possessed any portion of that vivid imagination for which the subject of these memoirs was distinguished. In page 11, it is observed by our poet, that his father had an unaccountable antipathy to dancing-schools, and that his attending one of these, brought on him his displeasure, and even dislike. On this observation Gilbert has made the following remark, which seems entitled to implicit credit.—" I wonder how Robert could attribute to our father that lasting resentment of his going to a dancing-school against his will, of which he was incapable. I believe the truth was, that he about this time began to see the dangerous impetuosity of my brother's passions, as well as his not being amenable to counsel, which often irritated my father; and which he would naturally think a dancing-school was not likely to correct. But he was proud of Robert's genius, which he bestowed more expense in cultivating, than on the rest of the family, in the instances of sending him to Ayr and Kirk-Oswald's schools; and he was greatly delighted with his warmth of heart, and his conversational powers. He had, indeed, that dislike of dancing-schools which Robert mentions; but so far overcame it during Robert's first month of attendance, that he allowed all the rest of the family that were fit for it, to accompany him during the second month. Robert excelled in dancing, and was for some time distractedly fond of it."

In the original letter to Dr. Moore, our poet described his ancestors as " renting lands of the noble Keiths of Marischal, and as having had the

* In page 13, the poet mentions his—" skulking from covert to covert, under the terror of a jail."—The " pack of the law" were " uncoupled at his heels," to oblige him to find security for the maintenance of his twin-children, whom he was not permitted to legitimate by a marriage with their mother!

honour of sharing their fate. I do not," continues he, "use the word *honour* with any reference to political principles; *loyal* and *disloyal*, I take to be merely relative terms, in that ancient and formidable court, known in this country by the name of Club-law, where the right is always with the strongest. But those who dare welcome ruin, and shake hands with infamy, for what they sincerely believe to be the cause of their God, or their king, are, as Mark Antony says in Shakespeare, of Brutus and Cassius, *honourable men*. I mention this circumstance because it threw my father on the world at large."

This paragraph has been omitted in printing the letter, at the desire of Gilbert Burns, and it would have been unnecessary to have noticed it on the present occasion, had not several manuscript copies of that letter been in circulation. "I do not know," observes Gilbert Burns, "how my brother could be misled in the account he has given of the Jacobitism of his ancestors.—I believe the earl Marischal forfeited his title and estate in 1715, before my father was born; and among a collection of parish certificates in his possession, I have read one, stating that the bearer had no concern in the *late wicked rebellion*." On the information of one who knew William Burnes soon after he arrived in the county of Ayr, it may be mentioned, that a report did prevail, that he had taken the field with the young Chevalier, a report which the certificate mentioned by his son, was, perhaps, intended to counteract. Strangers from the north, settling in the low country of Scotland, were in those days liable to suspicions, of having been, in the familiar phrase of the country, "Out in the forty-five" (1745), especially when they had any stateliness or reserve about them, as was the case with William Burnes. It may easily be conceived, that our poet would cherish the belief of his father's having been engaged in the daring enterprise of prince Charles-Edward. The generous attachment, the heroic valour, and the final misfortunes of the adherents of the house of Stewart, touched with sympathy his youthful and ardent mind, and influenced his original political opinions*.

The father of our poet is described by one who knew him towards the latter end of his life, as above the common stature, thin, and bent with labour. His countenance was serious and expressive, and the scanty locks on his head were grey. He was of a religious turn of mind, and, as is usual among the Scottish peasantry, a good deal conversant in speculative theology. There is in Gilbert's hands, a little manual of religious belief, in the form of a dialogue between a father and his son, composed by him for the use of his children, in which the benevolence of his heart seems to have led him to soften the rigid Calvinism of the Scottish church, into something approaching to Arminianism. He was a devout man, and in the practice of calling his family together to join in prayer. It is known that the following exquisite picture, in the *Cotter's Saturday Night* represents William Burnes and his family at their evening devotions.

The cheerful supper done, with serious face,
They, round the ingle*, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big *ha'-bible*, once his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets† wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales‡ a portion with judicious care;
And "*let us worship God!*" he says, with solemn air.

They chaunt their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's*§ wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*§, worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin* beets‖ the heavenly flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
No unison have they with our Creator's praise.

* There is another observation of Gilbert Burns on his brother's narrative, in which some persons will be interested. It refers to page 10, where the poet speaks of his youthful friends. "My brother," says Gilbert Burns, "seems to set off his early companions in too consequential a manner. The principal acquaintance we had in Ayr, while boys, were four sons of Mr. Andrew M'Culloch, a distant relation of my mother's, who kept a tea-shop, and had made a little money in the contraband trade, very common at that time. He died while the boys were young, and my father was nominated one of the tutors. The two eldest were bred shopkeepers, the third a surgeon, and the youngest, the only surviving one, was bred in a counting-house in Glasgow, where he is now a respectable merchant. I believe all these boys went to the West Indies. Then there were two sons of Dr. Malcolm, whom I have mentioned in my letter to Mrs. Dunlop. The eldest, a very worthy young man, went to the East Indies, where he had a commission in the army; he is the person whose heart my brother says the *Munny Begum scenes could not corrupt*. The other, by the interest of lady Wallace, got an ensigney in a regiment, raised by the duke of Hamilton, during the American war. I believe neither of them are now (1797) alive. We also knew the present Dr. Paterson, of Ayr, and a younger brother of his now in Jamaica, who were much younger than us. I had almost forgot to mention Dr. Charles, of Ayr, who was a little older than my brother, and with whom we had a longer and closer intimacy than with any of the others, which did not, however, continue in after-life.

* Fire.

† Gray temples.

‡ Chooses.

§ Names of tunes in Scottish psalmody. The tunes mentioned in this poem, are the three which were used by William Burnes, who had no greater variety.

‖ Adds fuel to.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page*,
How *Abram* was the *friend* of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the *royal bard* did groaning lie,
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How *he*, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head;
How his first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage, they wrote to many a land;
How *he*, who, lone in *Patmos* banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great Babylon's doom pronounc'd, by Heaven's command!

Then kneeling down, to Heaven's eternal King,
The *saint*, the *father*, and the *husband*, prays;
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,
That *thus* they all shall meet in future days;
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round, in an eternal sphere.

* * * * * * * * *

Then homeward all take off their several way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest;
The parent pair their *secret homage* pay,
And offer up to Heaven the warm request,
That *he* who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with *grace divine* preside!

Of a family so interesting as that which inhabited the cottage of William Burnes, and particularly of the father of the family, the reader will perhaps be willing to listen to some farther account. What follows, is given by one already mentioned with so much honour, in the narrative of Gilbert Burns, Mr. Murdoch, the preceptor of our poet, who, in a letter to Joseph Cooper Walker, esq., of Dublin, author of *The Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*, and of *The Historical Memoir of the Italian Tragedy*, thus expresses himself:

" Sir,

" I was lately favoured with a letter from our worthy friend, the Rev. Wm. Adair, in which he requested me to communicate to you whatever particulars I could recollect concerning Robert Burns, the Ayrshire poet. My business being at present multifarious and harassing, my attention is consequently so much divided, and I am so little in the habit of expressing my thoughts on paper, that, at this distance of time, I can give but a very imperfect sketch of the early part of the life of that extraordinary genius, with which alone I am acquainted.

" William Burnes, the father of the poet, was born in the shire of Kincardine, and bred a gardener. He had been settled in Ayrshire ten or twelve years before I knew him, and had been in the service of Mr. Crawford of Doonside. He was afterwards employed as a gardener and overseer by provost Ferguson of Doonholm, in the parish of Alloway, which is now united with that of Ayr. In this parish, on the road side, a Scotch mile and a half from the town of Ayr, and half a mile from the bridge of Doon, William Burnes took a piece of land, consisting of about seven acres, part of which he laid out in garden ground, and part of which he kept to graze a cow, &c., still continuing in the employ of provost Ferguson. Upon this little farm was erected an humble dwelling, of which William Burnes was the architect. It was, with the exception of a little straw, literally a tabernacle of clay. In this mean cottage, of which I myself was at times an inhabitant, I really believe there dwelt a larger portion of content, than in any palace in Europe. The *Cotter's Saturday Night* will give some idea of the temper and manners that prevailed there.

" In 1765, about the middle of March, Mr. W. Burnes came to Ayr, and sent to the school, where I was improving in writing, under my good friend Mr. Robison, desiring that I would come and speak to him at a certain inn, and bring my writing-book with me. This was immediately complied with. Having examined my writing, he was pleased with it (you will readily allow he was not difficult); and told me, that he had received very satisfactory information of Mr. Tennant, the master of the English school, concerning my improvement in English, and in his method of teaching. In the month of May following, I was engaged by Mr. Burnes, and four of his neighbours, to teach, and accordingly began to teach the little school at Alloway, which was situated a few yards from the argillaceous fabric above-mentioned. My five employers undertook to board me by turns, and to make up a certain salary, at the end of the year, provided my quarterly payments from the different pupils did not amount to that sum.

" My pupil, Robert Burns, was then between six and seven years of age; his preceptor, about eighteen. Robert and his younger brother, Gilbert, had been grounded a little in English, before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading, and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences, &c., Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys by far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were, the *Spelling*

* The course of family devotion among the Scotch, is first to sing a psalm, then to read a portion of scripture, and lastly to kneel down in prayer.

Book, the *New Testament*, the *Bible*, *Mason's Collection of Prose and Verse*, and *Fisher's English Grammar*. They committed to memory the hymns, and other poems of that collection, with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me in instructing them, which was, to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence, that was to be committed to memory. By the bye, this may be easier done, and at an earlier period, than is generally thought. As soon as they were capable of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order; sometimes to substitute synonimous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. These, you know, are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author. These are excellent helps to the arrangement of words in sentences, as well as to a variety of expression.

" Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit, than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music. Here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, *Mirth, with thee I mean to live;* and certainly, if any person who knew the two boys, had been asked, which of them was the most likely to court the muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.

" In the year 1767, Mr. Burnes quitted his mud edifice, and took possession of a farm (Mount Oliphant), of his own improving, while in the service of provost Ferguson. This farm being at a considerable distance from the school, the boys could not attend regularly; and some changes taking place among the other supporters of the school, I left it, having continued to conduct it for nearly two years and a half.

" In the year 1772, I was appointed (being one of five candidates who were examined) to teach the English school at Ayr; and, in 1773, Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising English grammar, &c., that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night, in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week, I told him, that, as he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, &c., I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation, that when he should meet with the name of a French town, ship, officer, or the like, in the newspapers, he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage.

" Now there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, &c. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French; so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of the second week of our study of the French, we began to read a little of the *Adventures of Telemachus*, in Fenelon's own words.

" But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso, and, armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalizing himself in the fields of Ceres—and so he did; for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man.

" Thus was I deprived of my very apt pupil, and consequently agreeable companion, at the end of three weeks, one of which was spent entirely in the study of English, and the other two chiefly in that of French. I did not, however, lose sight of him; but was a frequent visitant at his father's house, when I had my half holiday, and very often went accompanied with one or two persons more intelligent than myself, that good William Burnes might enjoy a mental feast. Then the labouring oar was shifted to some other hand. The father and the son sat down with us, when we enjoyed a conversation, wherein solid reasoning, sensible remark, and a moderate seasoning of jocularity, were so nicely blended, as to render it palatable to all parties. Robert had a hundred questions to ask me about the French, &c., and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some question to propose to my more learned friends, upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs Burnes, too, was of the party as much as possible.

> ' But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
> Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
> She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
> Devour up their discourse ;'——

And particularly that of her husband. At all times, and in all companies, she listened to him with a more marked attention than to any body else. When under the necessity of being absent while he was speaking, she seemed to regret as a real loss, that she had missed what the good man had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband, of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she highly esteemed him; for I myself have always considered William Burnes as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with—and many a worthy character I have known. I can cheerfully join with Robert in the last line of his epitaph (borrowed from Goldsmith),

> ' And ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.'

" He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner; and from her affec-

tionate behaviour to him, as well as her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother.

" He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue; not in driving them, as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but very seldom; and, therefore, when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a stripe with the *tawz*, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heart-felt pain, produced a loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

" He had the art of gaining the esteem and good will of those that were labourers under him. I think I never saw him angry but twice; the one time it was with the foreman of the band, for not reaping the field as he was desired; and the other time it was with an old man for using smutty innuendos and *double entendres*. Were every foul-mouth'd old man to receive a seasonable check in this way, it would be to the advantage of the rising generation. As he was at no time overbearing to inferiors, he was equally incapable of that passive, pitiful, paltry spirit, that induces some people to *keep booing and booing* in the presence of a great man. He always treated superiors with a becoming respect; but he never gave the smallest encouragement to aristocratical arrogance. But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable William Burnes. Time would fail me. I shall only add, that he carefully practised every known duty, and avoided every thing that was criminal; or, in the apostle's words, *Herein did he exercise himself, in living a life void of offence towards God, and towards men.* O for a world of men of such dispositions! We should then have no wars. I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions:—then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth, overtop and surpass most of the monuments I see in Westminster Abbey.

" Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive, from these few particulars, what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet. He spoke the English language with more propriety (both with respect to diction and pronunciation) than any man I ever knew, with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk, and reason like men, much sooner than their neighbours. I do not recollect any of their cotemporaries at my little seminary, who afterwards made any great figure as literary characters, except Dr. Tennant, who was chaplain to colonel Fullarton's regiment, and who is now in the East Indies. He is a man of genius and learning; yet affable, and free from pedantry.

" Mr. Burnes, in a short time, found that he had overrated Mount Oliphant, and that he could not rear his numerous family upon it.—After being there some years, he removed to Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, where, I believe, Robert wrote most of his poems.

" But here, sir, you will permi me to pause. I can tell you but little more relative to our poet. I shall, however, in my next, send you a copy of one of his letters to me, about the year 1783*. I received one since, but it is mislaid. Please remember me, in the best manner, to my worthy friend, Mr. Adair, when you see him, or write to him."

Hart-street, Bloomsbury-square,
London, Feb. 22, 1799.

As the narrative of Gilbert Burns was written at a time when he was ignorant of the existence of the preceding narrative of his brother, so this letter of Mr. Murdoch was written without his having any knowledge that either of his pupils had been employed on the same subject. The three relations serve, therefore, not merely to illustrate, but to authenticate each other. Though the information they convey might have been presented within a shorter compass, by reducing the whole into one unbroken narrative, it is scarcely to be doubted, that the intelligent reader will be far more gratified by a sight of these original documents themselves.

Under the humble roof of his parents, it appears, indeed, that our poet had great advantages; but his opportunities of information at school, were more limited as to time, than they usually are among his countrymen, in his condition of life; and the acquisitions which he made, and the poetical talent which he exerted, under the pressure of early and incessant toil, and of inferior, and perhaps scanty nutriment, testify at once the extraordinary force and activity of his mind. In his frame of body he rose nearly to five feet ten inches, and assumed the proportions that indicate agility as well as strength. In the various labours of the farm he excelled all his competitors. Gilbert Burns declares, that in mowing, the exercise that tries all the muscles most severely, Robert was the only man that, at the end of a summer's day, he was ever obliged to acknowledge as his master. But, though our poet gave the powers of his body to the labours of the farm, he refused to bestow on them his thoughts or his cares. While the ploughshare under his guidance passed through the sward, or the grass fell under the sweep of his scythe, he was humming the songs of his country, musing on the deeds of ancient valour, or rapt in the illusions of fancy, as her enchantments rose on his view. Happily, the Sunday is yet a sabbath, on which man and beast rest from their labours. On this day, therefore, Burns could indulge in a freer intercourse with the charms of nature. It was his delight to wander alone on the banks of the Ayr, whose stream is now immortal, and to listen to the song of the blackbird, at the close of the summer's day. But still greater was his pleasure, as he himself informs us, in walking on the sheltered side of a wood, in a cloudy winter day, and hearing the

* *See General Correspondence, No.* I.

storm rave among the trees; and more elevated still, his delight, to ascend some eminence during the agitations of nature, to stride along its summit, while the lightning flashed around him, and, amidst the howlings of the tempest, to apostrophize the spirit of the storm. Such situations he declares most favourable to devotion—"Rapt in enthusiasm, I seem to ascend towards Him, *who walks on the wings of the wind!*" If other proofs were wanting of the character of his genius, this might determine it. The heart of the poet is peculiarly awake to every impression of beauty and sublimity; but, with the higher order of poets, the beautiful is less attractive than the sublime.

The gaiety of many of Burns' writings, and the lively, and even cheerful colouring with which he has pourtrayed his own character, may lead some persons to suppose, that the melancholy which hung over him towards the end of his days, was not an original part of his constitution. It is not to be doubted, indeed, that this melancholy acquired a darker hue in the progress of his life: but, independent of his own, and of his brother's testimony, evidence is to be found among his papers, that he was subject very early to those depressions of mind, which are, perhaps, not wholly separable from the sensibility of genius, but which in him arose to an uncommon degree. The following letter, addressed to his father, will serve as a proof of this observation. It was written at the time when he was learning the business of a flax-dresser, and is dated

"*Irvine, Dec. 27th*, 1781.

"Honoured Sir,

"I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on new-year's day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast, produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment, is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought, that, ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life; for, I assure you, I am heartily tired of it, and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

'The soul uneasy and confined at home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.'

"It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelations, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me, for all that this world has to offer*. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks, for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which, I hope, have been remembered ere it is yet too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir; and, with wishing you a merry new-year's day, I shall conclude.

"I am, honoured sir, your dutiful son,
"ROBERT BURNS.

"P. S. My meal is nearly out, but I am going to borrow till I get more."

This letter, written several years before the publication of his poems, when his name was as obscure as his condition was humble, displays the philosophic melancholy which so generally forms the poetical temperament, and that buoyant and ambitious spirit, which indicates a mind conscious of its strength. At Irvine, Burns at this time possessed a single room for his lodging, rented perhaps at the rate of a shilling a week. He passed his days in constant labour as a flax-dresser, and his food consisted chiefly of oatmeal, sent to him from his father's family. The store of this humble, though wholesome nutriment, it appears, was nearly exhausted, and he was about to borrow, till he should obtain a supply. Yet, even in this situation, his active imagination had formed to itself pictures of eminence and distinction. His despair of making a figure in the world, shows how ardently he wished for honourable fame; and his contempt of life, founded on this despair, is the genuine expression of a youthful and generous mind. In such a state of reflection, and of suffering, the imagination of Burns naturally passed the dark boundaries of our earthly horizon, and rested on those beautiful representations of a better world, where there is neither thirst, nor hunger, nor sorrow, and where happiness shall be in proportion to the capacity of happiness.

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* The verses of Scripture here alluded to, are as follows:

15. *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.*

16. *They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.*

17. *For the lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

Such a disposition is far from being at variance with social enjoyments. Those who have studied the affinities of mind, know that a melancholy of this description, after a while seeks relief in the endearments of society, and that it has no distant connexion with the flow of cheerfulness, or even the extravagance of mirth. It was a few days after the writing of this letter, that our poet, "in giving a welcoming carousal to the new-year, with his gay companions," suffered his flax to catch fire, and his shop to be consumed to ashes.

The energy of Burns' mind was not exhausted by his daily labours, the effusions of his muse, his social pleasures, or his solitary meditations. Some time previous to his engagement as a flax-dresser, having heard that a debating club had been established in Ayr, he resolved to try how such a meeting would succeed in the village of Tarbolton. About the end of the year 1780, our poet, his brother, and five other young peasants of the neighbourhood, formed themselves into a society of this sort, the declared objects of which were to relax themselves after toil, to promote sociality and friendship, and to improve the mind. The laws and regulations were furnished by Burns. The members were to meet after the labours of the day were over, once a week, in a small public-house in the village; where each should offer his opinion on a given question or subject, supporting it by such arguments as he thought proper. The debate was to be conducted with order and decorum, and, after it was finished, the members were to choose a subject for discussion at the ensuing meeting. The sum expended by each, was not to exceed three-pence; and, with the humble potation that this could procure, they were to toast their mistresses, and to cultivate friendship with each other. This society continued its meetings regularly for some time, and in the autumn of 1782, wishing to preserve some account of their proceedings, they purchased a book, into which their laws and regulations were copied, with a preamble, containing a short history of their transactions down to that period. This curious document, which is evidently the work of our poet, has been discovered, and it deserves a place in his memoirs.

"*History of the rise, proceedings, and regulations of the Bachelor's Club.*

"Of birth or blood we do not boast,
Nor gentry does our club afford;
But ploughmen and mechanics we
In Nature's simple dress record.

"As the great end of human society is to become wiser and better, this ought, therefore, to be the principal view of every man in every station of life. But as experience has taught us, that such studies as inform the head and mend the heart, when long continued, are apt to exhaust the faculties of the mind; it has been found proper to relieve and unbend the mind, by some employment or another, that may be agreeable enough to keep its powers in exercise, but at the same time not so serious as to exhaust them. But, superadded to this, by far the greater part of mankind are under the necessity *of earning the sustenance of human life by the labour of their bodies*, whereby, not only the faculties of the mind, but the nerves and sinews of the body, are so fatigued, that it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to some amusement or diversion, to relieve the wearied man, worn down with the necessary labours of life.

"As the best of things, however, have been perverted to the worst of purposes, so, under the pretence of amusement and diversion, men have plunged into all the madness of riot and dissipation; and, instead of attending to the grand design of human life, they have begun with extravagance and folly, and ended with guilt and wretchedness. Impressed with these considerations, we, the following lads in the parish of Tarbolton, viz. Hugh Reid, Robert Burns, Gilbert Burns, Alexander Brown, Walter Mitchel, Thomas Wright, and William M'Gavin, resolved, for our mutual entertainment, to unite ourselves into a club or society, under such rules and regulations, that, while we should forget our cares and labours in mirth and diversion, we might not transgress the bounds of innocence and decorum; and, after agreeing on these, and some other regulations, we held our first meeting at Tarbolton, in the house of John Richard, upon the evening of the 11th of November, 1780, commonly called Hallowe'en, and, after choosing Robert Burns president for the night, we proceeded to debate on this question—*Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person, nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them a girl every way agreeable, in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune: which of them shall he choose?*—Finding ourselves very happy in our society, we resolved to continue to meet once a month in the same house, in the way and manner proposed, and shortly thereafter we chose Robert Ritchie for another member. In May, 1781, we brought in David Sillar*, and in June, Adam Jamaison, as members. About the beginning of the year 1782, we admitted Matthew Patterson and John Orr; and, in June following, we chose James Patterson as a proper brother for such a society. The club being thus increased, we resolved to meet at Tarbolton on the race-night, the July following, and have a dance in honour of our society. Accordingly we did meet each one with a partner, and spent the evening in such innocence and merriment, such cheerfulness and good-humour, that every brother will long remember it with pleasure and delight." To this preamble are subjoined the rules and regulations†.

The philosophical mind will dwell with interest and pleasure on an institution that combined so skilfully the means of instruction and of hap-

* The person to whom Burns addressed his *Epistle to Davie, a brother poet.*

† For which see *Appendix, No.* II. *Note* C.

piness; and if grandeur look down with a smile on these simple annals, let us trust that it will be a smile of benevolence and approbation. It is with regret that the sequel of the history of the Bachelor's Club of Tarbolton must be told. It survived several years after our poet removed from Ayrshire; but, no longer sustained by his talents, or cemented by his social affections, its meetings lost much of their attraction; and at length, in an evil hour, dissension arising amongst its members, the institution was given up, and the records committed to the flames. Happily the preamble and the regulations were spared; and, as matter of instruction and of example, they are transmitted to posterity.

After the family of our bard removed from Tarbolton to the neighbourhood of Mauchline, he and his brother were requested to assist in forming a similar institution there. The regulations of the club at Mauchline were nearly the same as those of the club at Tarbolton, but one laudable alteration was made. The fines for non-attendance had, at Tarbolton, been spent in enlarging their scanty potations. At Mauchline it was fixed that the money so arising, should be set apart for the purchase of books, and the first work procured in this manner was the *Mirror*, the separate numbers of which were at that time recently collected and published in volumes. After it, followed a number of other works, chiefly of the same nature, and among these the *Lounger*. The society of Mauchline still subsists, and appeared in the list of subscribers to the first edition of its celebrated associate.

The members of these two societies were originally all young men from the country, and chiefly sons of farmers; a description of persons, in the opinion of our poet, more agreeable in their manners, more virtuous in their conduct, and more susceptible of improvement, than the self-sufficient mechanics of country towns. With deference to the Conversation-society of Mauchline, it may be doubted whether the books which they purchased, were of a kind best adapted to promote the interest and happiness of persons in this situation of life. The *Mirror* and the *Lounger*, though works of great merit, may be said, on a general view of their contents, to be less calculated to increase the knowledge, than to refine the taste of those who read them; and to this last object their morality itself, which is, however, always perfectly pure, may be considered as subordinate. As works of taste they deserve great praise. They are indeed refined to a high degree of delicacy; and to this circumstance it is perhaps owing, that they exhibit little or nothing of the peculiar manners of the age or country in which they were produced. But delicacy of taste, though the source of many pleasures, is not without some disadvantages, and to render it desirable, the possessor should perhaps in all cases be raised above the necessity of bodily labour, unless, indeed, we should include under this term the exercise of the imitative arts, over which taste immediately presides. Delicacy of taste may be a blessing to him who has the disposal of his own time, and who can choose what book he shall read, of what diversion he shall partake, and what company he shall keep. To men so situated, the cultivation of taste affords a grateful occupation in itself, and opens a path to many other gratifications. To men of genius in the possession of opulence and leisure, the cultivation of the taste may be said to be essential; since it affords employment to those faculties, which, without employment, would destroy the happiness of the possessor, and corrects that morbid sensibility, or, to use the expression of Mr. Hume, that delicacy of passion, which is the bane of the temperament of genius. Happy had it been for our bard, after he emerged from the condition of a peasant, had the delicacy of his taste equalled the sensibility of his passions, regulating all the effusions of his muse, and presiding over all his social enjoyments. But to the thousands who share the original condition of Burns, and who are doomed to pass their lives in the station in which they were born, delicacy of taste, were it even of easy attainment, would, if not a positive evil, be at least a doubtful blessing. Delicacy of taste may make many necessary labours irksome or disgusting, and should it render the cultivator of the soil unhappy in his situation, it presents no means by which that situation may be improved. Taste and literature, which diffuse so many charms throughout society, which sometimes secure to their votaries distinction while living, and which still more frequently obtain for them posthumous fame, seldom procure opulence, or even independence, when cultivated with the utmost attention, and can scarcely be pursued with advantage by the peasant in the short intervals of leisure which his occupations allow. Those who raise themselves from the condition of daily labour, are usually men who excel in the practice of some useful art, or who join habits of industry and sobriety to an acquaintance with some of the more common branches of knowledge. The penmanship of Butterworth, and the arithmetic of Cocker, may be studied by men in the humblest walks of life, and they will assist the peasant more in the pursuit of independence, than the study of Homer or of Shakespeare, though he could comprehend, and even imitate the beauties of those immortal bards.

These observations are not offered without some portion of doubt and hesitation. The subject has many relations, and would justify an ample discussion. It may be observed, on the other hand, that the first step to improvement is to awaken the desire of improvement, and that this will be most effectually done by such reading as interests the heart and excites the imagination. The greater part of the sacred writings themselves, which, in Scotland, are more especially the manual of the poor, come under this description. It may be farther observed, that every human being is the proper judge of his own happiness, and within the path of innocence ought to be permitted to pursue it. Since it is the taste of the Scottish peasantry to give a preference to works of taste and of fancy*, it may be presumed, they

* In several lists of book-societies among the poorer classes in Scotland, which the editor has

find a superior gratification in the perusal of such works; and it may be added, that it is of more consequence they should be made happy in their original condition, than furnished with the means, or with the desire of rising above it. Such considerations are doubtless of much weight; nevertheless, the previous reflections may deserve to be examined, and here we shall leave the subject.

Though the records of the society at Tarbolton are lost, and those of the society at Mauchline have not been transmitted, yet we may safely affirm, that our poet was a distinguished member of both these associations, which were well calculated to excite and to develope the powers of his mind. From seven to twelve persons constituted the society at Tarbolton, and such a number is best suited to the purposes of information. Where this is the object of these societies, the number should be such, that each person may have an opportunity of imparting his sentiments, as well as of receiving those of others; and the powers of private conversation are to be employed, not those of public debate. A limited society of this kind, where the subject of conversation is fixed before hand, so that each member may revolve it previously in his mind, is perhaps one of the happiest contrivances hitherto discovered for shortening the acquisition of knowledge, and hastening the evolution of talents. Such an association requires, indeed, somewhat more of regulation than the rules of politeness establish in common conversation; or rather, perhaps, it requires that the rules of politeness, which, in animated conversation, are liable to perpetual violation, should be vigorously enforced. The order of speech established in the club at Tarbolton, appears to have been more regular than was required in so small a society*; where all that is necessary seems to be, the fixing on a member to whom every speaker shall address himself, and who shall in return secure the speaker from interruption. Conversation, which, among men whom intimacy and friendship have relieved from reserve and restraint, is liable, when left to itself, to so many inequalities, and which, as it becomes rapid, so often diverges into separate and collateral branches, in which it is dissipated and lost, being kept within its channel by a simple limitation of this kind, which practice renders easy and familiar, flows along in one full stream, and becomes smoother, and clearer, and deeper, as it flows. It may also be observed, that in this way the acquisition of knowledge becomes more pleasant and more easy, from the gradual improvement of the faculty employed to convey it. Though some attention has been paid to the eloquence of the senate and the bar, which in this, as in all other free governments, is productive of so much influence to the few who excel in it, yet little regard has been paid to the humbler exercise of speech in private conversation, an art that is of consequence to every description of persons under every form of government, and on which eloquence of every kind ought perhaps to be founded.

The first requisite of every kind of elocution, a distinct utterance, is the offspring of much time, and of long practice. Children are always defective in clear articulation, and so are young people, though in a less degree. What is called slurring in speech, prevails with some persons through life, especially in those who are taciturn. Articulation does not seem to reach its utmost degree of distinctness in men before the age of twenty, or upwards; in women it reaches this point somewhat earlier. Female occupations require much use of speech, because they are duties in detail. Besides, their occupations being generally sedentary, the respiration is left at liberty. Their nerves being more delicate, their sensibility as well as fancy is more lively; the natural consequence of which is, a more frequent utterance of thought, a greater fluency of speech, and a distinct articulation at an earlier age. But in men who have not mingled early and familiarly with the world, though rich perhaps in knowledge, and clear in apprehension, it is often painful to observe the difficulty with which their ideas are communicated by speech, through the want of those habits that connect thoughts, words, and sounds together; which, when established, seem as if they had arisen spontaneously, but which in truth are the result of long and painful practice, and, when analyzed, exhibit the phenomena of most curious and complicated association.

Societies then, such as we have been describing, while they may be said to put each member in possession of the knowledge of all the rest, improve the powers of utterance, and, by the collision of opinion, excite the faculties of reason and reflection. To those who wish to improve their minds in such intervals of labour as the condition of a peasant allows, this method of abbreviating instruction, may, under proper regulations, be highly useful. To the student whose opinions, springing out of solitary observation and meditation, are seldom in the first instance correct, and which have, notwithstanding, while confined to himself, an increasing tendency to assume in his own eye the character of demonstrations, an association of this kind, where they may be examined as they rise, is of the utmost importance; since it may prevent those illusions of imagination, by which genius being bewildered, science is often debased, and error propagated through successive generations. And to men, who, having cultivated letters, or general science, in the course of their education, are engaged in the active occupations of life, and no longer able to devote to study or to books the time requisite for improving or preserving their acquisitions, associations of this kind, where the mind may unbend from its usual cares in discussions of literature or science, afford the most pleasing, the most useful, and the most rational of gratifications*.

seen, works of this description form a great part. These societies are by no means general, and it is not supposed that they are increasing at present.

* *See Appendix, No.* II. *Note* C.

* When letters and philosophy were cultivated in ancient Greece, the press had not multiplied the tablets of learning and science, and necessity

Whether, in the humble societies of which he was a member, Burns acquired much direct information, may perhaps be questioned. It cannot, however, be doubted, that by collision, the faculties of his mind would be excited, that by practice, his habits of enunciation would be established, and thus we have some explanation of that early command of words and of expression, which enabled him to pour forth his thoughts in language not unworthy of his genius, and which, of all his endowments, seemed, on his appearance in Edinburgh, the most extraordinary*. For associations of a literary nature, our poet acquired a considerable relish; and happy had it been for him, after he emerged from the condition of a peasant, if fortune had permitted him to enjoy them in the degree of which he was capable, so as to have fortified his principles of virtue by the purification of his taste, and given to the energies of his mind, habits of exertion, that might have excluded other associations, in which it must be acknowledged they were too often wasted, as well as debased.

The whole course of the Ayr is fine, but the banks of that river, as it bends to the eastward above Mauchline, are singularly beautiful, and they were frequented, as may be imagined, by our poet in his solitary walks. Here the muse often visited him. In one of these wanderings, he met among the woods, a celebrated beauty of the west of Scotland; a lady, of whom it is said, that the charms of her person correspond with the character of her mind. This incident gave rise, as might be expected, to a poem, of which an account will be found in the following letter, in which he inclosed it to the object of his inspiration.

"To Miss ——

"*Mossgiel*, 18*th Nov.* 1786.

"Madam,

"Poets are such outré beings, so much the children of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a larger latitude in the laws of propriety, than the sober sons of prudence and judgment. I mention this as an apology for the liberties that a nameless stranger has taken with you in the inclosed poem, which he begs leave to present you with. Whether it has poetical merit any way worthy of the theme, I am not the proper judge; but it is the best my abilities can produce; and, what to a good heart will perhaps be a superior grace, it is equally sincere as fervent.

"The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though, I dare say, madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *reveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favourite haunts of my muse, on the banks of the Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. Surely, said I to myself, he must be a wretch indeed, who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, can eye your elusive flights to discover you secret recesses, and to rob you of all the property nature gives you, your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings. Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart, at such a time, but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it preserved from the rudely-browsing cattle, or the withering eastern blast? Such was the scene,—and such the hour, when, in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, or met a poet's eye, those visionary bards excepted, who hold commerce with aërial beings! Had Calumny and Villainy taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

"What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain, dull, historic prose into metaphor and measure.

"The inclosed song was the work of my return home; and perhaps it but poorly answers

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produced the habit of studying as it were in common. Poets were found reciting their own verses in public assemblies; in public schools only, philosophers delivered their speculations. The taste of the hearers, the ingenuity of the scholars, were employed in appreciating and examining the works of fancy and of speculation submitted to their consideration, and the *irrevocable words* were not given to the world before the composition, as well as the sentiments, were again and again retouched and improved. Death alone put the last seal on the labours of genius. Hence, perhaps, may be in part explained, the extraordinary art and skill with which the monuments of Grecian literature that remain to us, appear to have been constructed.

* It appears that our poet made more preparation than might be supposed, for the discussions of the society at Tarbolton.—There were found some detached memoranda, evidently prepared for these meetings; and, among others, the heads of a speech on the question mentioned *p.* 24, in which, as might be expected, he takes the *imprudent* side of the question. The following may serve as a farther specimen of the questions debated in the society at Tarbolton.—*Whether do we derive more happiness from love or friendship?—Whether between friends, who have no reason to doubt each others friendship, there should be any reserve?—Whether is the savage man or the peasant of a civilized country in the most happy situation?—Whether is a young man, of the lower ranks of life, likeliest to be happy, who has got a good education, and his mind well informed, or he who has just the education and information of those around him?*

what might have been expected from such a scene.

* * * * * * * * * * *

"I have the honour to be, madam, your most obedient, and very humble servant,

"ROBERT BURNS."

'Twas even—the dewy fields were green,
On every blade the pearls hang*;
The zephyr wantoned round the bean,
And bore its fragrant sweets alang:
In every glen the mavis sang,
All Nature listening seemed the while,
Except where green-wood echoes rang
Amang the braes o' Ballochmyle.

With careless step I onward strayed,
My heart rejoiced in nature's joy,
When, musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanced to spy;
Her look was like the morning's eye,
Her air like nature's vernal smile,
Perfection whispered, passing by,
Behold the lass o' Ballochmyle†!

Fair is the morn in flowery May,
And sweet is night in autumn mild;
When roving thro' the garden gay,
Or wandering in the lonely wild:
But woman, nature's darling child!
There all her charms she does compile;
Even there her other works are foil'd
By the bonny lass o' Ballochmyle.

O had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Tho' sheltered in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's plain!
Thro' weary winter's wind and rain
With joy, with rapture, I would toil,
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonny lass o' Ballochmyle.

Then pride might climb the slippery steep,
Where fame and honours lofty shine;
And thirst of gold might tempt the deep,
Or downward seek the Indian mine;
Give me the cot below the pine,
To tend the flocks or till the soil,
And every day have joys divine
With the bonny lass o' Ballochmyle.

In the manuscript book, in which our poet has recounted this incident, and into which the letter and poem are copied, he complains that the lady made no reply to his effusions, and this appears to have wounded his self-love. It is not, however, difficult to find an excuse for her silence. Burns was, at that time, little known, and, where known at all, noted rather for the wild strength of his humour, than for those strains of tenderness, in which he afterwards so much excelled. To the lady herself, his name had perhaps never been mentioned, and of such a poem she might not consider herself as the proper judge. Her modesty might prevent her from perceiving that the muse of Tibullus breathed in this nameless poet, and that her beauty was awakening strains destined to immortality on the banks of the Ayr. It may be conceived also, that, supposing the verses duly appreciated, delicacy might find it difficult to express its acknowledgments. The fervent imagination of the rustic bard possessed more of tenderness than of respect. Instead of raising himself to the condition of the object of his admiration, he presumed to reduce her to his own, and to strain this high-born beauty to his daring bosom. It is true, Burns might have found precedents for such freedoms among the poets of Greece and Rome, and indeed of every country. And it is not to be denied, that lovely women have generally submitted to this sort of profanation with patience, and even with good-humour. To what purpose is it to repine at a misfortune, which is the necessary consequence of their own charms, or to remonstrate with a description of men, who are incapable of controul?

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact."

It may be easily presumed, that the beautiful nymph of Ballochmyle, whoever she may have been, did not reject with scorn the adorations of our poet, though she received them with silent modesty and dignified reserve.

The sensibility of our bard's temper, and the force of his imagination, exposed him in a particular manner to the impressions of beauty; and these qualities, united to his impassioned eloquence, gave him in turn a powerful influence over the female heart. The banks of the Ayr formed the scene of youthful passions of a still tenderer nature, the history of which it would be improper to reveal, were it even in our power, and the traces of which will soon be discoverable only in those strains of nature and sensibility, to which they gave birth. The song entitled *Highland Mary*, is known to relate to one of these attachments. "It was written," says our bard, "on one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days." The object of this passion died early in life, and the impression left on the mind of Burns, seems to have been deep and lasting. Several years afterwards, when he was removed to Nithsdale, he gave vent to the sensibility of his recollections in the following impassioned lines.—In the manuscript book from which we extract them, they are addressed *To Mary in Heaven!*

Thou lingering star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

* *Hang*—Scotticism for *hung*.

† *Variation.* The lily's hue and rose's dye
Bespoke the lass o' Ballochmyle.

That sacred hour can I forget,
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love!
Eternity will not efface
Those records dear of transports past;
Thy image at our last embrace;
Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!
Ayr gurgling kissed his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods, thick'ning, green;
The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,
Twin'd amorous round the raptured scene.
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,
The birds sang love on every spray,
'Till too, too soon, the glowing west
Proclaimed the speed of winged day.
Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,
And fondly broods with miser care;
Time but the impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear.
My Mary, dear departed shade!
Where is thy blissful place of rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

To the delineations of the poet by himself, by his brother, and by his tutor, these additions are necessary, in order that the reader may see his character in its various aspects, and may have an opportunity of forming a just notion of the variety, as well as of the power of his original genius*.

* The history of the poems formerly printed, will be found in the Appendix to the volume in which these poems are contained.—It is there inserted in the words of Gilbert Burns, who, in a letter addressed to the editor, has given the following account of the friends which Robert's talents procured him before he left Ayrshire, or attracted the notice of the world.

" The farm of Mossgiel, at the time of our coming to it (Martinmas, 1783), was the property of the earl of Loudon, but was held in tack by Mr. Gavin Hamilton, writer in Mauchline, from whom we had our bargain; who had thus an opportunity of knowing, and showing a sincere regard for, my brother, before he knew that he was a poet. The poet's estimation of him and the strong outlines of his character, may be collected from the dedication to this gentleman. When the publication was begun, Mr. Hamilton entered very warmly into its interests, and promoted the subscription very extensively. Mr. Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, is a man of worth and taste, of warm affections, and connected with a most respectable circle of friends and relations. It is to this gentleman *The Cotter's Saturday Night* is inscribed. The poems of my brother, which I have formerly mentioned, no sooner came into his hands, than they were quickly known and well received in the extensive circle of Mr. Aiken's friends, which gave them a sort of currency, necessary in this wise world, even for the good reception of things valuable in themselves. But, Mr. Aiken not only admired the poet; as soon as he became acquainted with him, he showed the warmest regard for the man, and did every thing in his power to forward his interest and respectability. *The Epistle to a young Friend*, was addressed to this gentleman's son, Mr. A. H. Aiken, now of Liverpool. He was the oldest of a young family, who were taught to receive my brother with respect, as a man of genius, and their father's friend.

" *The Brigs of Ayr* is inscribed to John Ballantine, esq., banker in Ayr; one of those gentlemen to whom my brother was introduced by Mr. Aiken. He interested himself very warmly in my brother's concerns, and constantly showed the greatest friendship and attachment to him. When the Kilmarnock edition was all sold off, and a considerable demand pointed out the propriety of publishing a second edition, Mr. Wilson, who had printed the first, was asked if he would print a second, and take his chance of being paid from the first sale. This he declined, and when this came to Mr. Ballantine's knowledge, he generously offered to accommodate Robert with what money he might need for that purpose; but advised him to go to Edinburgh, as the fittest place for publishing. When he did go to Edinburgh, his friends advised him to publish again by subscription, so that he did not need to accept this offer. Mr. William Parker, merchant, in Kilmarnock, was a subscriber for thirty-five copies of the Kilmarnock edition. This may, perhaps, appear not deserving of notice here; but, if the comparative obscurity of the poet at this period be taken into consideration, it appears to me a greater effort of generosity, than many things which appear more brilliant in my brother's future history.

" Mr. Robert Muir, merchant in Kilmarnock, was one of those friends Robert's poetry had procured him, and one who was dear to his heart. This gentleman had no very great fortune, or long line of dignified ancestry, but what Robert says of captain Matthew Henderson, might be said of him with great propriety, *that he held the patent of his honours immediately from Almighty God.* Nature had, indeed, marked him a gentleman in the most legible characters. He died while yet a young man, soon after the publication of my brother's first Edinburgh edition. Sir William Cunningham of Robertland, paid a very flattering attention, and showed a good deal of friendship for the poet. Before his going to Edinburgh, as well as after, Robert seemed peculiarly pleased with professor Stewart's friendship and conversation.

" But of all the friendships which Robert acquired in Ayrshire or elsewhere, none seemed more agreeable to him than that of Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop, nor any which has been more uniformly and constantly exerted in behalf of him and his family; of which, were it proper, I could give many instances. Robert was on the point of setting out for Edinburgh before Mrs. Dunlop had heard of him. About the time of my brother's publishing in Kilmarnock, she had been

his history is connected with some views of the condition and manners of the humblest ranks of society, hitherto little observed, and which will perhaps be found neither useless nor uninteresting.

About the time of his leaving his native country, his correspondence commences, and, in the series of letters now given to the world, the chief incidents of the remaining part of his life will be found. This authentic, though melancholy record, will supersede in future the necessity of any extended narrative.

BURNS set out for Edinburgh in the month of November, 1786. He was furnished with a letter of introduction to Dr. Blacklock, from the gentleman to whom the doctor had addressed the letter which is represented by our bard as the immediate cause of his visiting the Scottish metropolis. He was acquainted with Mr. Stewart, professor of moral philosophy in the university, and had been entertained by that gentleman at Catrine, his estate in Ayrshire. He had been introduced, by Mr. Alexander Dalzel, to the earl of Glencairn, who had expressed his high approbation of his poetical talents. He had friends, therefore, who could introduce him into the circles of literature, as well as of fashion, and his own manners and appearance exceeding every expectation that could have been formed of them, he soon became an object of general curiosity and admiration. The following circumstance contributed to this in a considerable degree.—At the time when Burns arrived in Edinburgh, the periodical paper, entitled *The Lounger*, was publishing, every *Saturday* producing a successive number. His poems had attracted the notice of the gentlemen engaged in that undertaking, and the ninety-seventh number of those unequal, though frequently beautiful essays, is devoted to *An Account of Robert Burns, the Ayrshire ploughman, with extracts from his poems*, written by the elegant pen of Mr. Mackenzie*. The *Lounger* had an extensive circulation among persons of taste and literature, not in Scotland only, but in various parts of England, to whose acquaintance, therefore, our bard was immediately introduced. The paper of Mr. Mackenzie was calculated to introduce him advantageously. The extracts are well selected; the criticisms and reflections are judicious, as well as generous; and, in the style and sentiments, there is that happy delicacy, by which the writings of the author are so eminently distinguished. The extracts from Burns' poems in the ninety-seventh number of *The Lounger*, were copied into the London, as well as into many of the provincial papers, and the fame of our bard spread throughout the island. Of the manners, character, and conduct of Burns at this period, the following account has been given by Mr. Stewart, professor of moral philosophy in the university of Edinburgh, in a letter to the editor, which he is particularly happy to have obtained permission to insert in these memoirs.

afflicted with a long and severe illness, which had reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression. In this situation, a copy of the printed poems was laid on her table by a friend, and happening to open on *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, she read it over with the greatest pleasure and surprise: the poet's description of the simple cottagers, operating on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, expelling the dæmon *ennui*, and restoring her to her wonted inward harmony and satisfaction.—Mrs. Dunlop sent off a person express to Mossgiel, distant fifteen or sixteen miles, with a very obliging letter to my brother, desiring him to send her half a dozen copies of his poems, if he had them to spare, and begging he would do her the pleasure of calling at Dunlop-house as soon as convenient. This was the beginning of a correspondence which ended only with the poet's life. The last use he made of his pen was writing a short letter to this lady a few days before his death.

"Colonel Fullerton, who afterwards paid a very particular attention to the poet, was not in the country at the time of his first commencing author. At this distance of time, and in the hurry of a wet day, snatched from laborious occupations, I may have forgot some persons who ought to have been mentioned on this occasion, for which, if it come to my knowledge, I shall be heartily sorry."

The friendship of Mrs. Dunlop was of particular value to Burns. This lady, daughter and sole heiress to sir Thomas Wallace, of Craigie, and lineal descendant of the illustrious Wallace, the first of Scottish warriors, possesses the qualities of mind suited to her high lineage. Preserving in the decline of life the generous affections of youth, her admiration of the poet was soon accompanied by a sincere friendship for the man; which pursued him in after-life through good and evil report; in poverty, in sickness, and in sorrow; and which is continued to his infant family, now deprived of their parent.

"THE first time I saw Robert Burns, was on the 23d of October, 1786, when he dined at my house in Ayrshire, together with our common friend, Mr. John Mackenzie, surgeon in Mauchline, to whom I am indebted for the pleasure of his acquaintance. I am enabled to mention the date particularly, by some verses which Burns wrote after he returned home, and in which the day of our meeting is recorded.—My excellent and much lamented friend, the late Basil, lord Daer, happened to arrive at Catrine the same day, and, by the kindness and frankness of his manners, left an impression on the mind of the poet, which never was effaced. The verses I allude to, are among the most imperfect of his pieces; but a few stanzas may perhaps be an object of curiosity to you, both on account of the character to which

* This paper has been attributed, but improperly, to lord Craig, one of the Scottish judges, author of the very interesting account of Michael Bruce, in the 36th number of the *Mirror*.

they relate, and of the light which they throw on the situation and feelings of the writer, before his name was known to the public*.

"I cannot positively say, at this distance of time, whether, at the period of our first acquaintance, the Kilmarnock edition of his poems had been just published, or was yet in the press. I suspect that the latter was the case, as I have still in my possession, copies, in his own handwriting, of some of his favourite performances; particularly of his verses 'on turning up a Mouse with his plough;' 'on the Mountain Daisy;' and 'the Lament.' On my return to Edinburgh, I showed the volume, and mentioned what I knew of the author's history, to several of my friends, and, among others, to Mr. Henry Mackenzie, who first recommended him to public notice, in the 97th number of *The Lounger*.

"At this time, Burns' prospects in life were so extremely gloomy, that he had seriously formed a plan of going out to Jamaica in a very humble situation, not, however, without lamenting, that his want of patronage should force him to think of a project so repugnant to his feelings, when his ambition aimed at no higher an object than the station of an exciseman or gauger in his own country.

"His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth; but without any thing that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference, on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of any thing approaching to meanness or servility, rendered his manners somewhat decided and hard.—Nothing perhaps was more remarkable among his various attainments, than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

"He came to Edinburgh early in the winter following, and remained there for several months. By whose advice he took this step, I am unable to say. Perhaps it was suggested only by his own curiosity to see a little more of the world; but, I confess, I dreaded the consequences from the first, and always wished that his pursuits and habits should continue the same as in the former part of life; with the addition of, what I considered as then completely within his reach, a good farm on moderate terms, in a part of the country agreeable to his taste.

"The attentions he received during his stay in town, from all ranks and descriptions of persons, were such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavourable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance, which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in the country; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His

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* This poem is as follows.

This wot ye all whom it concerns,
I, Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,
October twenty-third,
A ne'er to be forgotten day,
Sae far I sprackled* up the brae,
I dinner'd wi' a lord.

I've been at drunken *writers'*† feasts,
Nay been bitch-fou 'mang godly priests,
Wi' reverence be it spoken;
I've even join'd the honour'd jorum,
When mighty squireships of the quorum
Their hydra drouth did sloken.

But wi' a lord—stand out my shin,
A lord—a peer—an earl's son,
Up higher yet my bonnet;
An sic a lord—lang Scotch ells twa,
Our peerage he o'erlooks them a',
As I look o'er my sonnet.

But oh, for Hogarth's magic pow'r
To show sir Bardy's willyart glowr‡,
An how he star'd and stammer'd,
When goavan§, as if led wi' branks‖,
An' stumpan on his ploughman shanks,
He in the parlour hammer'd.

I sidling shelter'd in a nook,
An' at his lordship steal't a look
Like some portentous omen;
Except good-sense and social glee,
An' (what surprised me) modesty,
I marked nought uncommon.

I watch'd the symptoms o' the great,
The gentle pride, the lordly state,
The arrogant assuming;
The feint a pride, nae pride had he,
Nor sauce, nor state that I could see,
Mair than an honest ploughman.

Then from his lordship I shall learn,
Henceforth to meet with unconcern
One rank as well's another;
Nae *honest worthy* man need care
To meet with noble youthful Daer,
For he but meets a brother.

These lines will be read with no common interest by all who remember the unaffected simplicity of appearance, the sweetness of countenance and manners, and the unsuspecting benevolence of heart, of Basil, lord Daer.

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* Clambered. † Attorneys.
‡ Frightened stare. § Walking stupidly.
‖ A kind of bridle.

dress was perfectly suited to his station, plain and unpretending, with a sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect right, he always wore boots; and, when on more than usual ceremony, buckskin breeches.

"The variety of his engagements, while in Edinburgh, prevented me from seeing him so often as I could have wished. In the course of the spring, he called on me once or twice, at my request, early in the morning, and walked with me to Braid-Hills in the neighbourhood of the town, when he charmed me still more by his private conversation, than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect once he told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind, which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and the worth which they contained.

"In his political principles he was then a Jacobite; which was perhaps owing partly to this, that his father was originally from the estate of lord Mareschall. Indeed, he did not appear to have thought much on such subjects, nor very consistently. He had a very strong sense of religion, and expressed deep regret at the levity with which he had heard it treated occasionally in some convivial meetings which he frequented. I speak of him as he was in the winter of 1786-7; for afterwards we met but seldom, and our conversation turned chiefly on his literary projects, or his private affairs.

"I do not recollect whether it appears or not from any of your letters to me, that you had ever seen Burns*. If you have, it is superfluous for me to add, that the idea which his conversation conveyed of the powers of his mind, exceeded, if possible, that which is suggested by his writings. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck, in more than one instance, with the unaccountable disparity between their general talents, and the occasional inspirations of their more favoured moments. But all the faculties of Burns' mind were, as far as I could judge, equally vigorous; and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation, I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities.

"Among the subjects on which he was accustomed to dwell, the characters of the individuals with whom he happened to meet, was plainly a favourite one. The remarks he made on them were always shrewd and pointed, though frequently inclining too much to sarcasm. His praise of those he loved was sometimes indiscriminate and extravagant; but this, I suspect, proceeded rather from the caprice and humour of the moment, than from the effects of attachment in blinding his judgment. His wit was ready, and always impressed with the marks of a vigorous understanding; but, to my taste, not often pleasing or happy. His attempts at epigram, in his printed works, are the only performances, perhaps, that he has produced, totally unworthy of his genius.

"In summer, 1787, I passed some weeks in Ayrshire, and saw Burns occasionally. I think that he made a pretty long excursion that season to the Highlands, and that he also visited what Beattie calls the Arcadian ground of Scotland, upon the banks of the Tiviot and the Tweed.

"I should have mentioned before, that, notwithstanding various reports I heard during the preceding winter, of Burns' predilection for convivial, and not very select society, I should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety, from all of him that ever fell under my own observation. He told me, indeed, himself, that the weakness of his stomach was such as to deprive him entirely of any merit in his temperance. I was, however, somewhat alarmed about the effect of his now comparatively sedentary and luxurious life, when he confessed to me, the first night he spent in my house after his winter's campaign in town, that he had been much disturbed when in bed, by a palpitation at his heart, which, he said, was a complaint to which he had of late become subject.

"In the course of the same season, I was led by curiosity to attend for an hour or two a mason-lodge in Mauchline, where Burns presided. He had occasion to make some short unpremeditated compliments to different individuals from whom he had no reason to expect a visit, and every thing he said was happily conceived, and forcibly, as well as fluently expressed. If I am not mistaken, he told me, that in that village, before going to Edinburgh, he had belonged to a small club of such of the inhabitants as had a taste for books, when they used to converse and debate on any interesting questions that occurred to them in the course of their reading. His manner of speaking in public, had evidently the marks of some practice in extempore elocution.

"I must not omit to mention, what I have always considered as characteristical in a high degree of true genius, the extreme facility and good nature of his taste, in judging of the compositions of others, where there was any real ground for praise. I repeated to him many passages of English poetry, with which he was unacquainted, and have more than once witnessed the tears of admiration and rapture, with which he heard them. The collection of songs by Dr. Aikin, which I first put into his hands, he read with unmixed delight, notwithstanding his former efforts in that very difficult species of writing; and I have little doubt that it had some effect in polishing his subsequent compositions.

"In judging of prose, I do not think his taste was equally sound. I once read to him a passage or two in Franklin's Works, which I thought very happily executed, upon the model of Addison; but he did not appear to relish, or to perceive the beauty which they derived from their exquisite simplicity; and spoke of them with indifference, when compared with the point, and

* The editor has seen and conversed with Burns.

antithesis, and quaintness of *Junius*. The influence of this taste is very perceptible in his own prose compositions, although their great and various excellencies render some of them scarcely less objects of wonder than his poetical performances. The late Dr. Robertson used to say, that, considering his education, the former seemed to him the more extraordinary of the two.

" His memory was uncommonly retentive, at least for poetry, of which he recited to me frequently long compositions with the most minute accuracy. They were chiefly ballads, and other pieces in our Scottish dialect; great part of them (he told me) he had learned in his childhood, from his mother, who delighted in such recitations, and whose poetical taste, rude as it probably was, gave, it is presumable, the first direction to her son's genius.

" Of the more polished verses which accidentally fell into his hands, in his early years, he mentioned particularly the recommendatory poems by different authors, prefixed to *Hervey's Meditations;* a book which has always had a very wide circulation among such of the country people of Scotland, as affect to unite some degree of taste with their religious studies. And these poems (although they are certainly below mediocrity) he continued to read with a degree of rapture beyond expression. He took notice of this fact himself, as a proof how much the taste is liable to be influenced by accidental circumstances.

" His father appeared to me, from the account he gave of him, to have been a respectable and worthy character, possessed of a mind superior to what might have been expected from his station in life. He ascribed much of his own principles and feelings, to the early impressions he had received from his instructions and example. I recollect that he once applied to *him* (and he added, that the passage was a literal statement of fact) the two last lines of the following passage in the *Minstrel;* the whole of which he repeated with great enthusiasm.

Shall I be left forgotten in the dust,
When fate, relenting, lets the flower revive?
Shall nature's voice, to man alone unjust,
Bid him, though doom'd to perish, hope to live?

Is it for this fair virtue oft must strive
With disappointment, penury, and pain?
No: heaven's immortal spring shall yet arrive;
And man's majestic beauty bloom again,
Bright through th' eternal year of love's triumphant reign.

This truth sublime, his simple sire had taught;
In sooth, 'twas almost all the shepherd knew.

" With respect to Burns' early education, I cannot say any thing with certainty. He always spoke with respect and gratitude of the schoolmaster who had taught him to read English, and who, finding in his scholar a more than ordinary ardour for knowledge, had been at pains to instruct him in the grammatical principles of the language. He began the study of Latin, but dropped it before he had finished the verbs. I have sometimes heard him quote a few Latin words, such as *omnia vincit amor, &c.*, but they seemed to be such as he had caught from conversation, and which he repeated by *rote*. I think he had a project, after he came to Edinburgh, of prosecuting the study under his intimate friend, the late Mr. Nicol, one of the masters of the grammar-school here; but I do not know that he ever proceeded so far as to make the attempt.

" He certainly possessed a smattering of French; and, if he had an affectation in any thing, it was in introducing occasionally a word or phrase from that language. It is possible that his knowledge, in this respect, might be more extensive than I suppose it to be; but this you can learn from his more intimate acquaintance. It would be worth while to inquire, whether he was able to read the French authors with such facility, as to receive from them any improvement to his taste. For my own part, I doubt it much—nor would I believe it, but on very strong and pointed evidence.

" If my memory does not fail me, he was well instructed in arithmetic, and knew something of practical geometry, particularly of surveying.—All his other attainments were entirely his own.

" The last time I saw him was during the winter 1788-89*, when he passed an evening with me at Drumseugh, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where I was then living. My friend Mr. Alison was the only other person in company. I never saw him more agreeable or interesting. A present which Mr. Alison sent him afterwards of his *Essays on Taste*, drew from Burns a letter of acknowledgment, which I remember to have read with some degree of surprise at the distinct conception he appeared from it to have formed, of the general principles of the doctrine of *association*. When I saw Mr. Alison in Shropshire, last autumn, I forgot to inquire if the letter be still in existence. If it is, you may easily procure it, by means of our friend Mr. Houlbrooke†."

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THE scene that opened on our bard in Edinburgh was altogether new, and, in a variety of other respects, highly interesting; especially to one of his disposition of mind. To use an expression of his own, he found himself " suddenly translated from the veriest shades of life," into the presence, and, indeed, into the society, of a number of persons, previously known to him by report as of the highest distinction in his country, and whose characters it was natural for him to examine with no common curiosity.

From the men of letters, in general, his reception was particularly flattering. The late Dr. Robertson, Dr. Blair, Dr. Gregory, Mr. Stewart, Mr. Mackenzie, and Mr. Fraser Tytler, may be men-

* " Or rather 1789-90. I cannot speak with confidence, with respect to the particular year. Some of my other dates may possibly require correction, as I keep no journal of such occurrences.

† *See General Correspondence, No.* CXII.

tioned in the list of those who perceived his uncommon talents, who acknowledged more especially his powers in conversation, and who interested themselves in the cultivation of his genius. In Edinburgh, literary and fashionable society are a good deal mixed. Our bard was an acceptable guest in the gayest and most elevated circles, and frequently received from female beauty and elegance, those attentions, above all others, most grateful to him. At the table of lord Monboddo he was a frequent guest; and while he enjoyed the society, and partook of the hospitalities of the venerable judge, he experienced the kindness and condescension of his lovely and accomplished daughter. The singular beauty of this young lady was illuminated by that happy expression of countenance which results from the union of cultivated taste and superior understanding, with the finest affections of the mind. The influence of such attractions was not unfelt by our poet. "There has not been any thing like Miss Burnet," said he, in a letter to a friend, "in all the combination of beauty, grace, and goodness, the Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence*." In his *Address to Edinburgh*, she is celebrated in a strain of still greater elevation;

"Fair Burnet strikes th' adoring eye,
Heaven's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high,
And own his work indeed divine† !"

This lovely woman died a few years afterwards in the flower of youth. Our bard expressed his sensibility on that occasion, in verses addressed to her memory‡.

Among the men of rank and fashion, Burns was particularly distinguished by James, earl of Glencairn. On the motion of this nobleman, the *Caledonian Hunt*, an association of the principal of the nobility and gentry of Scotland, extended their patronage to our bard, and admitted him to their gay orgies. He repaid their notice by a dedication of the enlarged and improved edition of his poems, in which he has celebrated their patriotism and independence in very animated terms.

"I congratulate my country, that the blood of her ancient heroes runs uncontaminated; and that, from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. * * * * * * * * * May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find in you an inexorable foe§!"

It is to be presumed, that these generous sentiments, uttered at an æra singularly propitious to independence of character and conduct, were favourably received by the persons to whom they were addressed, and that they were echoed from every bosom, as well as from that of the earl of Glencairn. This accomplished nobleman, a scholar, a man of taste and sensibility, died soon afterwards. Had he lived, and had his power equalled his wishes, Scotland might still have exulted in the genius, instead of lamenting the early fate of her favourite bard.

A taste for letters is not always conjoined with habits of temperance and regularity; and Edinburgh, at the period of which we speak, contained perhaps an uncommon proportion of men of considerable talents, devoted to social excesses, in which their talents were wasted and debased.

Burns entered into several parties of this description, with the usual vehemence of his character. His generous affections, his ardent eloquence, his brilliant and daring imagination, fitted him to be the idol of such associations; and, accustoming himself to conversation of unlimited range, and to festive indulgences that scorned restraint, he gradually lost some portion of his relish for the more pure, but less poignant pleasures, to be found in the circles of taste, elegance, and literature. The sudden alteration in his habits of life, operated on him physically, as well as morally. The humble fare of an Ayrshire peasant, he had exchanged for the luxuries of the Scottish metropolis, and the effects of this change on his ardent constitution, could not be inconsiderable. But, whatever influence might be produced on his conduct, his excellent understanding suffered no corresponding debasement. He estimated his friends and associates of every description at their proper value, and appreciated his own conduct with a precision, that might give scope to much curious and melancholy reflection. He saw his danger, and at times formed resolutions to guard against it; but he had embarked on the tide of dissipation, and was borne along its stream.

Of the state of his mind at this time, an authentic, though imperfect document remains, in a book which he procured in the spring of 1787, for the purpose, as he himself informs us, of recording in it whatever seemed worthy of observation. The following extracts may serve as a specimen.

Edinburgh, April 9th, 1787.

"As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new, to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr. Palgrave, that "half a word fixed, upon, or near the spot, is worth a cart load of recollection." I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker or branch of the

* *See General Correspondence, No.* IX.
† *See Poems.*
‡ *See General Correspondence, No.* CI.
§ *See Dedication to Poems.*

darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel-writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship, as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

"For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my confidant. I will sketch every character that any way strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes, and take down remarks, in the old law phrase, *without feud or favour*.—Where I hit on any thing clever, my own applause will, in some measure, feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security, at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever.

"My own private story likewise, my love-adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted.—In short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set up to sale.

"To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I would cheerfully make one exception—the connexion between two persons of different sexes, when their interests are united and absorbed by the tie of love—

> When thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
> And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart.

There, confidence, confidence that exalts them the more in one another's opinion, that endears them the more to each other's hearts, unreservedly "reigns and revels." But this is not my lot, and in my situation, if I am wise (which, by the bye, I have no great chance of being), my fate should be cast with the psalmist's sparrow, "to watch alone on the house tops"—Oh, the pity!

* * * * * * * *

"There are few of the sore evils under the sun, give me more uneasiness and chagrin, than the comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowed worth, is received every where, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving *honour to whom honour is due;* he meets at a great man's table a squire something, or a sir somebody; he knows the *noble* landlord, at heart, gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes beyond perhaps any one at table; yet, how will it mortify him to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an *eightpenny tailor*, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice, that are withheld from the son of genius and poverty!

"The noble G—— has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand, and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

"With —— I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or, still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*. When he neglects me for the mere carcass of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, what do I care for him or his pomp either?

* * * * * * * * *

The intentions of the poet in procuring this book, so fully described by himself, were very imperfectly executed. He has inserted in it few or no incidents, but several observations and reflections, of which the greater part that are proper for the public eye, will be found interwoven in the volume of his letters. The most curious particulars in the book, are the delineations of the characters he met with. These are not numerous; but they are chiefly of persons of distinction in the republic of letters, and nothing but the delicacy and respect due to living characters prevents us from committing them to the press. Though it appears that, in his conversation, he was sometimes disposed to sarcastic remarks on the men with whom he lived, nothing of this kind is discoverable in these more deliberate efforts of his understanding, which, while they exhibit great clearness of discrimination, manifest also the wish, as well as the power, to bestow high and generous praise.

By the new edition of his poems, Burns acquired a sum of money, that enabled him not only to partake of the pleasures of Edinburgh, but to gratify a desire he had long entertained, of visiting those parts of his native country, most attractive by their beauty or their grandeur; a desire which the return of summer naturally revived. The scenery on the banks of the Tweed, and of its tributary streams, strongly interested his fancy; and, accordingly, he left Edinburgh on the 6th of May, 1787, on a tour through a country so much celebrated in the rural songs of Scotland. He travelled on horseback, and was accompanied during some part of his journey by Mr. Ainslie, now writer to the signet, a gentleman who enjoyed much of his friendship and of his confidence. Of this tour a journal remains, which,

however, contains only occasional remarks on the scenery, and which is chiefly occupied with an account of the author's different stages, and with his observations on the various characters to whom he was introduced. In the course of this tour, he visited Mr. Ainslie, of Berrywell, the father of his companion; Mr. Brydone, the celebrated traveller, to whom he carried a letter of introduction from Mr. Mackenzie; the reverend Dr. Sommerville, of Jedburgh, the historian; Mr. and Mrs. Scott, of Wauchope; Dr. Elliot, a physician, retired to a romantic spot on the banks of the Roole; sir Alexander Don; sir James Hall, of Dunglass; and a great variety of other respectable characters. Every where the fame of the poet had spread before him, and every where he received the most hospitable and flattering attentions. At Jedburgh he continued several days, and was honoured by the magistrates with the freedom of their borough. The following may serve as a specimen of this tour, which the perpetual reference to living characters, prevents our giving at large.

"*Saturday, May 6th.* Left Edinburgh—Lammer-muir-hills, miserably dreary in general, but at times very picturesque.

"Lanson-edge, a glorious view of the Merse. Reach Berrywell. * * * The family-meeting with my *compagnon de voyage*, very charming; particularly the sister. * * *

"*Sunday.* Went to church at Dunse. Heard Dr. Bowmaker. * * *

"*Monday.* Coldstream—glorious river Tweed—clear and majestic—fine bridge—dine at Coldstream, with Mr. Ainslie, and Mr. Foreman. Beat Mr. Foreman in a dispute about Voltaire. Drink tea at Lenel-House, with Mr. and Mrs. Brydone. * * * Reception extremely flattering. Sleep at Coldstream.

"*Tuesday.* Breakfast at Kelso—charming situation of the town—fine bridge over the Tweed. Enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, especially on the Scotch side. * * * Visit Roxborough palace—fine situation of it. Ruins of Roxborough castle—a holly-bush growing where James the second was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin, and a fine old garden, planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by a Hottentot, a *maitre d'hotel* of the duke's!—Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire—bad roads—turnip and sheep-husbandry, their great improvements. * * * Low markets, consequently low lands—magnificence of farmers and farm-houses. Come up the Tiviot, and up the Jed to Jedburgh to lie, and so wish myself good night.

"*Wednesday.* Breakfast with Mr. Fair. * * * Charming romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens and orchards, intermingled among the houses and the ruins of a once magnificent cathedral. All the towns here have the appearance of old rude grandeur, but extremely idle.—Jed, a a fine romantic little river. Dined with captain Rutherford, * * * return to Jedburgh. Walk up the Jed with some ladies to be shown Lovelane, and Blackburn, two fairy scenes. Introduced to Mr. Potts, writer, and to Mr. Sommerville, the clergyman of the parish, a man, and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning.

* * * * * * * *

"*Jedburgh, Saturday.* Was presented by the magistrates with the freedom of the town.

"Took farewell of Jedburgh with some melancholy sensations.

"*Monday, May 14th, Kelso.* Dine with the farmers' club—all gentlemen talking of high matters—each of them keeps a hunter from 30*l.* to 50*l.* value, and attends the fox-hunting club in the country. Go out with Mr. Ker, one of the club, and a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, to sleep. In his mind and manners, Mr. Ker is astonishingly like my dear old friend Robert Muir.—Every thing in his house elegant. He offers to accompany me in my English tour.

"*Tuesday.* Dine with sir Alexander Don; a very wet day. * * * Sleep at Mr. Ker's again, and set out next day for Melross—visit Dryburgh, a fine old ruined abbey, by the way. Cross the Leader and come up the Tweed to Melross. Dine there, and visit that far-famed glorious ruin.—Come to Selkirk up the banks of Ettrick. The whole country hereabouts, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stoney."

* * * * * * * *

Having spent three weeks in exploring this interesting scenery, Burns crossed over into Northumberland. Mr. Ker, and Mr. Hood, two gentlemen with whom he had become acquainted in the course of his tour, accompanied him. He visited Alnwick-castle, the princely seat of the duke of Northumberland; the hermitage and old castle of Warksworth; Morpeth and Newcastle.—In this last town he spent two days, and then proceeded to the south-west by Hexham and Wardrue, to Carlisle.—After spending a day at Carlisle, with his friend Mr. Mitchel, he returned into Scotland, and at Annan his journal terminates abruptly.

Of the various persons with whom he became acquainted in the course of this journey, he has, in general, given some account; and almost always a favourable one. That on the banks of the Tweed, and of the Tiviot, our bard should find nymphs that were beautiful, is what might be confidently presumed. Two of these are particularly described in his journal. But it does not appear that the scenery, or its inhabitants, produced any effort of his muse, as was to have been wished and expected. From Annan, Burns proceeded to Dumfries, and thence through Sanquhar, to Mossgiel, near Mauchline, in Ayrshire, where he arrived about the 8th of June, 1787, after a long absence of six busy and eventful months. It will easily be conceived with what pleasure and pride he was received by his mother, his brothers, and sisters. He had left them poor, and comparatively friendless; he returned to them high in public estimation, and easy in his circumstances. He returned to them unchanged in his ardent affections, and ready to share with them, to the uttermost farthing, the pittance that fortune had bestowed.

Having remained with them a few days, he

proceeded again to Edinburgh, and immediately set out on a journey to the Highlands. Of this tour, no particulars have been found among his manuscripts. A letter to his friend Mr. Ainslie, dated, *Arrachas, near Crochairbas, by Lochleary, June* 28, 1787, commences as follows:

" I write you this on my tour through a country, where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary—to-morrow night's stage, Dumbarton. I ought sooner to have answered your kind letter, but you know I am a man of many sins."

From this journey, Burns returned to his friends in Ayrshire, with whom he spent the month of July, renewing his friendships, and extending his acquaintance throughout the country, where he was now very generally known and admired. In August, he again visited Edinburgh, whence he undertook another journey towards the middle of this month, in company with Mr. M. Adair, now Dr. Adair, of Harrowgate, of which this gentleman has favoured us with the following account.

" Burns and I left Edinburgh together, in August, 1787. We rode by Linlithgow and Carron, to Stirling. We visited the iron-works at Carron, with which the poet was forcibly struck. The resemblance between that place, and its inhabitants, to the cave of the Cyclops, which must have occurred to every classical visitor, presented itself to Burns. At Stirling, the prospects from the castle strongly interested him; in a former visit to which, his national feelings had been powerfully excited by the ruinous and roofless state of the hall in which the Scottish parliaments had frequently been held. His indignation had vented itself in some imprudent, but not unpoetical lines, which had given much offence, and which he took this opportunity of erasing, by breaking the pane of the window at the inn on which they were written.

" At Stirling we met with a company of travellers from Edinburgh, among whom was a character in many respects congenial with that of Burns. This was Nicol, one of the teachers of the high-grammar-school, at Edinburgh—the same wit and power of conversation; the same fondness for convivial society, and thoughtlessness of to-morrow, characterized both. Jacobitical principles in politics were common to both of them; and these have been suspected, since the revolution of France, to have given place in each, to opinions apparently opposite. I regret that I have preserved no *memorabilia* of their conversation, either on this or on other occasions, when I happened to meet them together. Many songs were sung; which I mention for the sake of observing, that when Burns was called on in his turn, he was accustomed, instead of singing, to recite one or other of his own shorter poems, with a tone and emphasis, which, though not correct or harmonious, were impressive and pathetic. This he did on the present occasion.

" From Stirling we went next morning through the romantic and fertile vale of Devon to Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, then inhabited by Mrs. Hamilton, with the younger part of whose family Burns had been previously acquainted. He introduced me to the family, and there was formed my first acquaintance with Mrs. Hamilton's eldest daughter, to whom I have been married for nine years. Thus was I indebted to Burns for a connection from which I have derived, and expect further to derive, much happiness.

" During a residence of about ten days at Harvieston, we made excursions to visit various parts of the surrounding scenery, inferior to none in Scotland, in beauty, sublimity, and romantic interest; particularly Castle Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle; and the famous cataract of the Devon, called the *Caldron Linn;* and the *Rumbling Bridge*, a single broad arch, thrown by the Devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river, at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed. I am surprised that none of these scenes should have called forth an exertion of Burns' muse. But I doubt if he had much taste for the picturesque. I well remember, that the ladies at Harvieston, who accompanied us on this jaunt, expressed their disappointment at his not expressing in more glowing and fervid language, his impressions of the *Caldron Linn* scene, certainly highly sublime, and somewhat horrible.

" A visit to Mrs. Bruce, of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race which gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings more powerfully. This venerable dame, with characteristical dignity, informed me, on my observing, that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. Though almost deprived of speech by a paralytic affection, she preserved her hospitality and urbanity. She was in possession of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honour of knighthood, remarking, that she had a better right to confer that title than *some people.* * * You will of course conclude that the old lady's political tenets were as Jacobitical as the poet's, a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception and entertainment.—She gave as her first toast after dinner, *Awa' Uncos*, or, Away with the strangers.—Who these strangers were, you will readily understand. Mrs. A. corrects me by saying it should be *Hooi*, or *Hoohi uncos*, a sound used by shepherds to direct their dogs to drive away the sheep!

" We returned to Edinburgh by Kinross (on the shore of Lochleven) and Queen's-ferry. I am inclined to think Burns knew nothing of poor Michael Bruce, who was then alive at Kinross, or had died there a short while before. A meeting between the bards, or a visit to the deserted cottage and early grave of poor Bruce, would have been highly interesting*.

" At Dumfermling we visited the ruined abbey, and the abbey-church, now consecrated to presbyterian worship. Here I mounted the *cutty stool*, or stool of repentance, assuming the character of

* Bruce died some years before. E.

a penitent for fornication; while Burns, from the pulpit, addressed to me a ludicrous reproof and exhortation, parodied from that which had been delivered to himself in Ayrshire, where he had, as he assured me, once been one of seven who mounted the *seat of shame* together.

"In the church-yard, two broad flag-stones marked the grave of Robert Bruce, for whose memory Burns had more than common veneration. He knelt and kissed the stone with sacred fervour, and heartily (*suus ut mos erat*) execrated the worse than Gothic neglect of the first of Scottish heroes*."

The surprise expressed by Dr. Adair, in his excellent letter, that the romantic scenery of the Devon should have failed to call forth any exertion of the poet's muse, is not in its nature singular; and the disappointment felt at his not expressing in more glowing language his emotions on the sight of the famous cataract of that river, is similar to what was felt by the friends of Burns on other occasions of the same nature. Yet, the inference that Dr. Adair seems inclined to draw from it, that he had little taste for the picturesque, might be questioned, even if it stood uncontroverted by other evidence. The muse of Burns was in a high degree capricious; she came uncalled, and often refused to attend at his bidding. Of all the numerous subjects suggested to him by his friends and correspondents, there is scarcely one that he adopted. The very expectation that a particular occasion would excite the energies of fancy, if communicated to Burns, seemed in him, as in other poets, destructive of the effect expected. Hence, perhaps, may be explained, why the banks of the Devon and of the Tweed form no part of the subjects of his song.

A similar train of reasoning may, perhaps, explain the want of emotion with which he viewed the *Caldron Linn*. Certainly there are no affections of the mind more deadened by the influence of previous expectation, than those arising from the sight of natural objects, and more especially of objects of grandeur. Minute descriptions of scenes of a sublime nature, should never be given to those who are about to view them, particularly if they are persons of great strength and sensibility of imagination. Language seldom or never conveys an adequate idea of such objects; but, in the mind of a great poet, it may excite a picture that far transcends them. The imagination of Burns might form a cataract, in comparison with which, the *Caldron Linn* should seem the purling of a rill, and even the mighty falls of Niagara, an humble cascade†.

Whether these suggestions may assist in explaining our bard's deficiency of impression on the occasion referred to, or whether it ought rather to be imputed to some pre-occupation, or indisposition of mind, we presume not to decide; but, that he was in general feelingly alive to the beautiful or sublime in scenery, may be supported by irresistible evidence. It is true, this pleasure was greatly heightened in his mind, as might be expected, when combined with moral emotions of a kind with which it happily unites. That under this association Burns contemplated the scenery of the Devon with the eye of a genuine poet, the following lines, written at this very period, may bear witness.

On a young lady, residing on the banks of the small river Devon, in Clackmannanshire, but whose infant years were spent in Ayrshire.

How pleasant the banks of the clear-winding Devon,
With green-spreading bushes, and flowers blooming fair;
But the bonniest flower on the banks of the Devon
Was once a sweet bud on the braes of the Ayr.

Mild be the sun on this sweet blushing flower,
In the gay rosy morn as it bathes in the dew!
And gentle the fall of the soft vernal shower,
That steals on the evening each leaf to renew!

O spare the dear blossom, ye orient breezes,
With chill hoary wing as ye usher the dawn!
And far be thou distant, thou reptile that seizest
The verdure and pride of the garden and lawn!

Let Bourbon exult in his gay gilded lilies,
And England triumphant display her proud rose;
A fairer than either adorns the green valleys
Where Devon, sweet Devon, meandering flows.

The different journeys already mentioned did not satisfy the curiosity of Burns. About the beginning of September, he again set out from Edinburgh on a more extended tour to the Highlands, in company with Mr. Nicol, with whom he had now contracted a particular intimacy, which lasted during the remainder of his life. Mr. Nicol was of Dumfriesshire, of a descent equally humble with our poet. Like him he rose by the strength of his talents, and fell by the strength of his passions. He died in the summer of 1797. Having received the elements of a classical instruction at his parish school, Mr. Nicol made a

* Extracted from a letter of Dr. Adair to the editor.

† This reasoning might be extended, with some modifications, to objects of sight of every kind. To have formed before-hand a distinct picture in the mind of any interesting person or thing, generally lessens the pleasure of the first meeting with them. Though this picture be not superior or even equal to the reality, still it can never be expected to be an exact resemblance; and the disappointment felt at finding the object something different from what was expected, interrupts and dimishes the emotion that would otherwise be produced. In such cases, the second or third interview gives more pleasure than the first.—See *The Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, by *Mr. Stewart*, *p.* 484. Such publications as *The Guide to the Lakes*, where every scene is described in the most minute manner, and sometimes with considerable exaggeration of language, are in this point of view objectionable.

very rapid and singular proficiency; and, by early undertaking the office of an instructor himself, he acquired the means of entering himself at the University of Edinburgh. There he was first a student of theology, then a student of medicine, and was afterwards employed in the assistance and instruction of graduates in medicine, in those parts of their exercises in which the Latin language is employed. In this situation he was the contemporary and rival of the celebrated Dr. Brown, whom he resembled in the particulars of his history, as well as in the leading features of his character. The office of assistant-teacher in the high-school being vacant, it was, as usual, filled up by competition; and, in the face of some prejudices, and perhaps of some well-founded objections, Mr. Nicol, by superior learning, carried it from all the other candidates. This office he filled at the period of which we speak.

It is to be lamented, that an acquaintance with the writers of Greece and Rome, does not always supply an original want of taste and correctness, in manners and conduct; and, where it fails of this effect, it sometimes inflames the native pride of temper, which treats with disdain those delicacies in which it has not learnt to excel. It was thus with the fellow-traveller of Burns. Formed by nature in a model of great strength, neither his person nor his manners had any tincture of taste or elegance; and his coarseness was not compensated by that romantic sensibility, and those towering flights of imagination, which distinguished the conversation of Burns, in the blaze of whose genius, all the deficiencies of his manners were absorbed and disappeared.

Mr. Nicol and our poet travelled in a post-chaise, which they engaged for the journey, and, passing through the heart of the Highlands, stretched northwards about ten miles beyond Inverness. There they bent their course eastward across the island, and returned by the shore of the German sea to Edinburgh. In the course of this tour, some particulars of which will be found in a letter of our bard to his brother*, they visited a number of remarkable scenes, and the imagination of Burns was constantly excited by the wild and sublime scenery through which he passed. Of this several proofs may be found in the poems formerly printed†. Of the history of one of these poems, *The Humble Petition of Bruar Water*‡, and of the bard's visit to Athole-house, some particulars will be found in *General Correspondence, No.* XXVIII.; and, by the favour of Mr. Walker of Perth, then residing in the family of the duke of Athole, we are enabled to give the following additional account.

"On reaching Blair, he sent me notice of his arrival (as I had been previously acquainted with him), and I hastened to meet him at the inn. The duke, to whom he brought a letter of introduction, was from home; but the duchess, being informed of his arrival, gave him an invitation to sup and sleep at Athole-house. He accepted the invitation, but, as the hour of supper was at some distance, begged I would in the interval be his guide through the grounds. It was already growing dark; yet the softened, though faint and uncertain view of their beauties, which the moonlight afforded us, seemed exactly suited to the state of his feelings at the time. I had often, like others, experienced the pleasures which arise from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw himself on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. I cannot help thinking it might have been here, that he conceived the idea of the following lines, which he afterwards introduced into his poem on *Bruar Water*, when only fancying such a combination of objects, as were now present to his eye.

Or, by the reaper's nightly beam,
Mild, checquering thro' the trees,
Rave to my darkly-dashing stream,
Hoarse-swelling on the breeze.

"It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time to supper.

"My curiosity was great to see how he would conduct himself in company so different from what he had been accustomed to*. His manner was unembarrassed, plain, and firm. He appeared to have complete reliance on his own native good sense for directing his behaviour. He seemed at once to perceive and to appreciate what was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation, but, when led into it, he spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone gave him a title to be there. The duke's fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as *honest men and bonnie lasses*, an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed his poem†.

"Next day I took a ride with him through some of the most romantic parts of that neighbourhood, and was highly gratified by his conversation. As a specimen of his happiness of conception and strength of expression, I will mention a remark which he made on his fellow-traveller, who was walking, at the time, a few paces before

* *See General Correspondence, No.* XXIX.

† *Lines on seeing some water-fowl in Loch-Turit, a wild scene among the hills of Ochtertyre.—Lines written with a pencil over the chimney-piece, in the inn of Kenmore, Taymouth.—Lines written with a pencil standing by the fall of Fyers, near Lochness.*

‡ *See Poems.*

* In the preceding winter Burns had been in company of the highest rank in Edinburgh, but this description of his manners is perfectly applicable to his first appearance in such society. E.

† *See Poems.*

us. He was a man of a robust, but clumsy person; and while Burns was expressing to me the value he entertained for him, on account of his vigorous talents, although they were clouded at times by coarseness of manners; "in short," he added, "his mind is like his body, he has a confounded strong in-kneed sort of a soul."

"Much attention was paid to Burns both before and after the duke's return, of which he was perfectly sensible, without being vain; and at his departure I recommended to him, as the most appropriate return he could make, to write some descriptive verses on any of the scenes with which he had been so much delighted. After leaving Blair, he, by the duke's advice, visited the *Falls of Bruar*, and in a few days I received a letter from Inverness with the verses inclosed*."

It appears that the impression made by our poet on the noble family of Athole, was in a high degree favourable; it is certain, he was charmed with the reception he received from them, and he often mentioned the two days he spent at Athole-house, as amongst the happiest of his life. He was warmly invited to prolong his stay, but sacrificed his inclinations to his engagement with Mr. Nicol, which is the more to be regretted, as he would otherwise have been introduced to Mr. Dundas (then daily expected on a visit to the duke), a circumstance that might have had a favourable influence on Burns' future fortunes. At Athole-house he met, for the first time, Mr. Graham, of Fintry, to whom he was afterwards indebted for his office in the excise.

The letters and poems which he addressed to Mr. Graham, bear testimony of his sensibility, and justify the supposition, that he would not have been deficient in gratitude, had he been elevated to a situation better suited to his disposition and to his talents†.

A few days after leaving Blair of Athole, our poet and his fellow-traveller arrived at Fochabers. In the course of the preceding winter, Burns had been introduced to the duchess of Gordon, at Edinburgh, and, presuming on this acquaintance, he proceeded to Gordon castle, leaving Mr. Nicol at the inn in the village. At the castle our poet was received with the utmost hospitality and kindness, and the family being about to sit down to dinner, he was invited to take his place at table as a matter of course. This invitation he accepted, and, after drinking a few glasses of wine, he rose up, and proposed to withdraw. On being pressed to stay, he mentioned, for the first time, his engagement with his fellow-traveller; and his noble host offering to send a servant to conduct Mr. Nicol to the castle, Burns insisted on undertaking that office himself. He was, however, accompanied by a gentleman, a particular acquaintance of the duke, by whom the invitation was delivered in all the forms of politeness. The invitation came too late; the pride of Nicol was inflamed into a high degree of passion, by the neglect which he had already suffered. He had ordered the horses to be put to the carriage, being determined to proceed on his journey alone; and they found him parading the streets of Fochabers, before the door of the inn, venting his anger on the postillion, for the slowness with which he obeyed his commands. As no explanation nor entreaty could change the purpose of his fellow-traveller, our poet was reduced to the necessity of separating from him entirely, or of instantly proceeding with him on their journey. He chose the last of these alternatives, and seating himself beside Nicol in the post-chaise, with mortification and regret, he turned his back on Gordon castle, where he had promised himself some happy days. Sensible, however, of the great kindness of the noble family, he made the best return in his power, by the following poem*.

I.

Streams that glide in orient plains,
Never bound by winter's chains;
Glowing here on golden sands,
There commix'd with foulest stains
From tyranny's empurpled bands:
These, their richly gleaming waves,
I leave to tyrants and their slaves;
Give me the stream that sweetly laves
The banks by castle Gordon.

II.

Spicy forests, ever gay,
Shading from the burning ray
Hapless wretches sold to toil,
Or the ruthless native's way,
Bent on slaughter, blood, and spoil:
Woods that ever verdant wave,
I leave the tyrant and the slave,
Give me the groves that lofty brave
The storms, by castle Gordon.

III.

Wildly here, without controul,
Nature reigns and rules the whole;
In that sober pensive mood,
Dearest to the feeling soul,
She plants the forest, pours the flood;
Life's poor day I'll musing rave,
And find at night a sheltering cave,
Where waters flow and wild woods wave,
By bonnie castle Gordon†.

Burns remained at Edinburgh during the greater part of the winter 1787-8, and again entered into the society and dissipation of that metropolis. It appears, that on the 31st day of December, he attended a meeting to celebrate the birth-day of the lineal descendant of the Scottish race of kings,

* Extract of a letter from Mr. Walker to Mr. Cunningham, dated *Perth*, 24*th Oct.* 1797.

The letter mentioned as written to Mr. Walker by Mr. Burns, will be found in *General Correspondence*, *No.* XXVIII.

† See the first *Epistle to Mr. Graham*, soliciting an employment in the excise, *General Correspondence*, *No.* LV; and his second epistle, *Poems*.

* This information is extracted from a letter of Dr. Couper of Fochabers, to the editor.

† These verses our poet composed to be sung to *Morag*, a Highland air, of which he was extremely fond.

the late unfortunate prince Charles-Edward. Whatever might have been the wish or purpose of the original institutors of this annual meeting, there is no reason to suppose that the gentlemen of which it was at this time composed, were not perfectly loyal to the king on the throne. It is not to be conceived that they entertained any hope of, any wish for, the restoration of the house of Stewart; but over their sparkling wine, they indulged the generous feelings which the recollection of fallen greatness is calculated to inspire; and commemorated the heroic valour, which strove to sustain it in vain—valour worthy of a nobler cause and of a happier fortune. On this occasion, our bard took upon himself the office of poet-laureate, and produced an ode, which, though deficient in the complicated rhythm and polished versification that such compositions require, might, on a fair competition, where energy of feelings and of expression were alone in question, have won the butt of Malmsey from the real laureate of that day.

The following extracts may serve as a specimen.

* * * * * * *
* * * * * * *

False flatterer, Hope, away!
Nor think to lure us as in days of yore:
We solemnize this sorrowing natal day,
To prove our loyal truth—we can no more;
And, owning Heaven's mysterious sway,
Submissive, low, adore.

II.

Ye honoured mighty dead!
Who nobly perish'd in the glorious cause,
Your king, your country, and her laws!
From great Dundee, who smiling victory led,
And fell a martyr in her arms,
(What breast of northern ice but warms?)
To bold Balmerino's undying name,
Whose soul of fire, lighted at heaven's high flame,
Deserves the proudest wreath departed heroes claim*.

III.

Not unrevenged your fate shall be,
It only lags the fatal hour;
Your blood shall with incessant cry
Awake at last th' unsparing power.
As from the cliff, with thundering course,
The snowy ruin smokes along,
With doubling speed and gathering force,
Till deep it crashing whelms the cottage in the vale;
So vengeance * * *

In relating the incidents of our poet's life in Edinburgh, we ought to have mentioned the sentiments of respect and sympathy with which he traced out the grave of his predecessor Fergusson, over whose ashes, in the Canongate church-yard, he obtained leave to erect an humble monument, which will be viewed by reflecting minds with no common interest, and which will awake in the bosom of kindred genius, many a high emotion*. Neither should we pass over the continued friendship he experienced from a poet then living, the amiable and accomplished Blacklock.—To his encouraging advice, it was owing (as has already appeared) that Burns, instead of emigrating to the West Indies, repaired to Edinburgh. He received him there with all the ardour of affectionate admiration; he eagerly introduced him to the respectable circle of his friends; he consulted his interest; he blazoned his fame; he lavished upon him all the kindness of a generous and feeling heart, into which nothing selfish or envious ever found admittance. Among the friends to whom he introduced Burns, was Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, to whom our poet paid a visit in the autumn of 1787, at his delightful retirement in the neighbourhood of Stirling, and on the banks of the Teith. Of this visit we have the following particulars.

" I have been in the company of many men of genius," says Mr. Ramsay, " some of them poets, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him, the impulse of the moment, sparks of celestial fire! I never was more delighted, therefore, than with his company for two days, tete-a-tete. In a mixed company I should have made little of him, for, in the gamester's phrase, he did not always know when to play off and when to play on. * * * I not only proposed to him the writing of a play similar to the *Gentle Shepherd*, *qualem decet esse sororem*, but *Scottish Georgics*, a subject which Thomson has by no means exhausted in his Seasons. What beautiful landscapes of rural life and manners, might not have been expected from a pencil so faithful and forcible as his, which could have exhibited scenes as familiar and interesting as those in the *Gentle Shepherd*, which every one who knows our swains in their unadulterated state, instantly recognizes as true to nature. But to have executed either of these plans, steadiness and abstraction from company were wanting, not talents. When I asked him whether the Edinburgh literati had mended his poems by their criticisms. " sir," said he, " these gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine, that it is neither fit for weft nor woof." He said he had not changed a word except one, to please Dr. Blair†."

* In the first part of this ode there is some beautiful imagery, which the poet afterwards interwove, in a happier manner, in the *Chevalier's Lament* (*see General Correspondence*, *No.* XLIV). But, if there were no other reasons for omitting to print the entire poem, the want of originality would be sufficient. A considerable part of it is a kind of rant, for which, indeed, precedent may be cited in various other birth-day odes, but with which it is impossible to go along.

* *See General Correspondence*, *Nos.* XVIII, XIX, and XX, where the epitaph will be found.

† *Extract of a letter from Mr. Ramsay to the editor.* This incorrigibility of Burns extended, however, only to his poems printed before he arrived in Edinburgh; for, in regard to his unpublished poems, he was amenable to criticism, of which many proofs might be given. See some remarks on this subject, *Appendix to Poems.* E.

Having settled with his publisher, Mr. Creech, in February, 1788, Burns found himself master of nearly five hundred pounds, after discharging all his expenses. Two hundred pounds he immediately advanced to his brother Gilbert, who had taken upon himself the support of their aged mother, and was struggling with many difficulties in the farm of Mossgiel. With the remainder of this sum, and some farther eventual profits from his poems, he determined on settling himself for life in the occupation of agriculture, and took from Mr. Miller, of Dalswinton, the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the river Nith, six miles above Dumfries, on which he entered on Whitsunday, 1788. Having been previously recommended to the board of excise, his name had been put on the list of candidates for the humble office of a gauger or exciseman; and he immediately applied to acquiring the information necessary for filling that office, when the honourable board might judge it proper to employ him. He expected to be called into service in the district in which his farm was situated, and vainly hoped to unite with success, the labours of the farm, with the duties of the exciseman.

When Burns had, in this manner, arranged his plans for futurity, his generous heart turned to the object of his most ardent attachment, and, listening to no considerations but those of honour and affection, he joined with her in a public declaration of marriage, thus legalizing their union, and rendering it permanent for life*.

Before Burns was known in Edinburgh, a specimen of his poetry had recommended him to Mr. Miller of Dalswinton. Understanding that he intended to resume the life of a farmer, Mr. Miller had invited him, in the spring of 1787, to view his estate in Nithsdale, offering him at the same time the choice of any of his farms out of lease, at such a rent as Burns and his friends might judge proper. It was not in the nature of Burns to take an undue advantage of the liberality of Mr. Miller. He proceeded in this business, however, with more than usual deliberation. Having made choice of the farm of Ellisland, he employed two of his friends, skilled in the value of land, to examine it; and, with their approbation, offered a rent to Mr. Miller, which was immediately accepted. It was not convenient for Mrs. Burns to remove immediately from Ayrshire, and our poet, therefore, took up his residence alone at Ellisland to prepare for the reception of his wife and children, who joined him towards the end of the year.

The situation in which Burns now found himself, was calculated to awaken reflection. The different steps he had of late taken, were, in their nature, highly important, and might be said to have, in some measure, fixed his destiny. He had become a husband and a father; he had engaged in the management of a considerable farm, a difficult and laborious undertaking; in his success the happiness of his family was involved; it was time, therefore, to abandon the gaiety and dissipation of which he had been too much enamoured; to ponder seriously on the past, and to form virtuous resolutions respecting the future. That such was actually the state of his mind, the following extract from his common-place book may bear witness.

"*Ellisland, Sunday, 14th June*, 1788.

"This is now the third day that I have been in this country. 'Lord, what is man!' What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas, and fancies! And what a capricious kind of existence he has here! * * * There is, indeed, an elsewhere, where, as Thomson says, *virtue sole survives.*

> Tell us, ye dead,
> Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
> What 'tis you are and we must shortly be?
> ——————— A little time
> Will make us wise as you are, and as close.'

"I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's Adam, 'gladly lay me in my mother's lap, and be at peace.'

"But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream till some sudden squall shall overset the silly vessel, or, in the listless return of years, its own craziness reduce it to a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which, though half-sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, *the water is naught and the ground barren*, and nothing short of a supernaturally-gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

"Wedlock, the circumstance that buckles me hardest to care, if virtue and religion were to be any thing with me but names, was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on; in my present situation it was absolutely necessary. Humanity, generosity, honest pride of character, justice to my own happiness for after-life, so far as it could depend (which it surely will a great deal) on internal peace; all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on *her* part to repent it. —I can fancy how, but have never seen where, I could have made a better choice. Come then, let me act up to my favourite motto, that glorious passage in Young—

> 'On reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man!'"

Under the impulse of these reflections, Burns immediately engaged in re-building the dwelling-house on his farm, which, in the state he found it, was inadequate to the accommodation of his family. On this occasion, he himself resumed at times the occupation of a labourer, and found neither his strength nor his skill impaired.—Pleased with surveying the grounds he was about to cultivate, and with the rearing of a building that should give shelter to his wife and children, and, as he fondly hoped, to his own gray hairs, sentiments of

* *See p.* 18.

independence buoyed up his mind, pictures of domestic content and peace rose on his imagination; and a few days passed away, as he himself informs us, the most tranquil, if not the happiest, which he had ever experienced*.

It is to be lamented that at this critical period of his life, our poet was without the society of his wife and children. A great change had taken place in his situation; his old habits were broken; and the new circumstances in which he was placed, were calculated to give a new direction to his thoughts and conduct†. But his application to the cares and labours of his farm, was interrupted by several visits to his family in Ayrshire; and as the distance was too great for a single day's journey, he generally spent a night at an inn on the road. On such occasions he sometimes fell into company, and forgot the resolutions he had formed. In a little while temptation assailed him nearer home.

His fame naturally drew upon him the attention of his neighbours, and he soon formed a general acquaintance in the district in which he lived. The public voice had now pronounced on the subject of his talents; the reception he had met with in Edinburgh, had given him the currency which fashion bestows; he had surmounted the prejudices arising from his humble birth; and he was received at the table of the gentlemen of Nithsdale, with welcome, with kindness, and even with respect. Their social parties too often seduced him from his rustic labours and his rustic fare, overthrew the unsteady fabric of his resolutions, and inflamed those propensities which temperance might have weakened, and prudence ultimately suppressed‡. It was not long, therefore, before Burns began to view his farm with dislike and despondence, if not with disgust.

Unfortunately he had for several years looked to an office in the excise as a certain means of livelihood, should his other expectations fail. As has already been mentioned, he had been recommended to the board of excise, and had received the instruction necessary for such a situation. He now applied to be employed; and, by the interest of Mr. Graham of Fintry, was appointed exciseman, or, as it is vulgarly called, gauger, of the district in which he lived. His farm was after this, in a great measure, abandoned to servants, while he betook himself to the duties of his new appointment.

He might, indeed, still be seen in the spring, directing his plough, a labour in which he excelled; or with a white sheet containing his seed-corn slung across his shoulders, striding with measured steps along his turned-up furrows, and scattering the grain in the earth. But his farm no longer occupied the principal part of his care or his thoughts. It was not at Ellisland that he was now in general to be found. Mounted on horseback, this high-minded poet was pursuing the defaulters of the revenue, among the hills and vales of Nithsdale, his roving eye wandering over the charms of nature, and *muttering his wayward fancies* as he moved along.

"I had an adventure with him in the year 1790," says Mr. Ramsay, of Ochtertyre, in a letter to the editor, "when passing through Dumfriesshire, on a tour to the south, with Dr. Steuart of Luss. Seeing him pass quickly, near Closeburn, I said to my companion, that is Burns. On coming to the inn, the ostler told us he would be back in a few hours to grant permits; that where he met with any thing seizable, he was no better than any other gauger; in every thing else, that he was perfectly a gentleman. After leaving a note to be delivered to him on his return, I proceeded to his house, being curious to see his Jean, &c. I was much pleased with his *uxor Sabina qualis*, and the poet's modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinary rustics. In the evening he suddenly bounced in upon us, and said as he entered, I come, to use the words of Shakespeare, *stewed in haste*. In fact, he had ridden incredibly fast after receiving my note. We fell into conversation directly, and soon got into the *mare magnum* of poetry. He told me that he

* Animated sentiments of any kind, almost always gave rise in our poet to some production of his muse. His sentiments on this occasion were in part expressed by the following vigorous and characteristic, though not very delicate, verses; they are an imitation of an old ballad.

I hae a wife o' my ain,
I'll partake wi' nae-body;
I'll tak cuckold frae nane,
I'll gie cuckold to nae-body.

I hae a penny to spend,
There—thanks to nae-body;
I hae naething to lend,
I'll borrow frae nae-body.

I am nae-body's lord,
I'll be slave to nae-body;
I hae a gude braid sword,
I'll tak dunts frae nae-body.

I'll be merry and free,
I'll be sad for nae-body;
If nae-body care for me,
I'll care for nae-body.

† Mrs. Burns was about to be confined in childbed, and the house at Ellisland was rebuilding.

‡ The poem of *The Whistle* celebrates a Bacchanalian contest among three gentlemen of Nithsdale, where Burns appears as umpire. Mr. Riddell died before our bard, who wrote some elegiac verses to his memory. From him, and from all the members of his family, Burns received not kindness only, but friendship; and the society he met in general at Friar's Carse, was calculated to improve his habits, as well as his manners. Mr. Ferguson, of Craigdarroch, so well known for his eloquence and social talents, died soon after our poet. Sir Robert Laurie, the third person in the drama, survives, and has since been engaged in contests of a bloodier nature. Long may he live to fight the battles of his country! (1799.)

had now gotten a story for a drama, which he was to call *Rob Macquechan's Elshon*, from a popular story of Robert Bruce being defeated on the water of Caern, when the heel of his boot having loosened in his flight, he applied to Robert Macquechan to fix it; who, to make sure, ran his awl nine inches up the king's heel. We were now going on at a great rate, when Mr. S—— popped in his head, which put a stop to our discourse, which had become very interesting. Yet, in a little while, it was resumed, and such was the force and versatility of the bard's genius, that he made the tears run down Mr. S——'s cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain. * * * From that time we met no more, and I was grieved at the reports of him afterwards. Poor Burns! we shall hardly ever see his like again. He was, in truth, a sort of comet in literature, irregular in its motions, which did not do good proportioned to the blaze of light it displayed."

In the summer of 1791, two English gentlemen, who had before met with him in Edinburgh, paid a visit to him at Ellisland. On calling at the house, they were informed that he had walked out on the banks of the river; and, dismounting from their horses, they proceeded in search of him.—On a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man employed in angling, of a singular appearance. He had a cap made of a fox's skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt, from which depended an enormous Highland broad-sword. It was Burns. He received them with great cordiality, and asked them to share his humble dinner—an invitation which they accepted. On the table they found boiled beef, with vegetables, and barley-broth, after the manner of Scotland; of which they partook heartily. After dinner, the bard told them ingenuously that he had no wine to offer them, nothing better than Highland whiskey, a bottle of which Mrs. Burns set on the board. He produced at the same time his punch-bowl, made of Inverary-marble, and, mixing the spirit with water and sugar, filled their glasses, and invited them to drink*. The travellers were in haste, and besides, the flavour of the whiskey, to their *suthron* palates, was scarcely tolerable; but the generous poet offered them his best, and his ardent hospitality they found it impossible to resist. Burns was in his happiest mood, and the charms of his conversation were altogether fascinating. He ranged over a great variety of topics, illuminating whatever he touched. He related the tales of his infancy and of his youth; he recited some of the gayest and some of the tenderest of his poems; in the wildest of his strains of mirth, he threw in some touches of melancholy, and spread around him the electric emotions of his powerful mind. The Highland whiskey improved in its flavour; the marble-bowl was again and again emptied and replenished; the guests of our poet forgot the flight of time, and the dictates of prudence: at the hour of midnight they lost their way in returning to Dumfries, and could scarcely distinguish it when assisted by the morning's dawn*.

Besides his duties in the excise, and his social pleasures, other circumstances interfered with the attention of Burns to his farm. He engaged in the formation of a society for purchasing and circulating books among the farmers of his neighbourhood, of which he undertook the management†; and he occupied himself occasionally in composing songs for the musical work of Mr. Johnson, then in the course of publication.—These engagements, useful and honourable in themselves, contributed no doubt to the abstraction of his thoughts from the business of agriculture.

The consequences may be easily imagined. Notwithstanding the uniform prudence and good management of Mrs. Burns, and though his rent was moderate and reasonable, our poet found it convenient, if not necessary, to resign his farm to Mr. Miller, after having occupied it three years and a half. His office in the excise had originally produced about fifty pounds per annum. Having acquitted himself to the satisfaction of the board, he had been appointed to a new district, the emoluments of which rose to about seventy pounds per annum. Hoping to support himself and his family on this humble income till promotion should reach him, he disposed of his stock and of his crop on Ellisland by public auction, and removed to a small house which he had taken in Dumfries, about the end of the year 1791.

Hitherto Burns, though addicted to excess in social parties, had abstained from the habitual use of strong liquors, and his constitution had not suffered any permanent injury from the irregularities of his conduct. In Dumfries, temptations to *the sin that so easily beset him*, continually presented themselves; and his irregularities grew by degrees into habits. These temptations unhappily occurred during his engagements in the business of his office, as well as during his hours of relaxation; and though he clearly foresaw the consequence of yielding to them, his appetites and sensations, which could not pervert the dictates of his judgment, finally triumphed over the powers of his will. Yet, this victory was not obtained without many obstinate struggles, and, at times, temperance and virtue seemed to have obtained the mastery. Besides his engagements in the excise, and the society into which they led, many circumstances contributed to the melancholy fate of Burns. His great celebrity made him an object of interest and curiosity to strangers, and few persons of cultivated minds passed through Dumfries without attempting to see our poet, and to enjoy the pleasure of his conversation. As he could not receive them under his own humble roof, these interviews passed at the inns of the town, and often terminated in those excesses, which Burns sometimes provoked, and was seldom able to resist. And, among the inhabitants of Dumfries and its vicinity, there were never wanting persons

* This bowl was made of the stone of which Inverary-house is built; the mansion of the family of Argyle. This stone is the *lapis ollaris*.

* Given from the information of one of the party.

† *See General Correspondence. No.* LXXXVI.

to share his social pleasures; to lead or accompany him to the tavern; to partake in the wildest sallies of his wit; to witness the strength and the degradation of his genius.

Still, however, he cultivated the society of persons of taste and of respectability, and in their company could impose on himself the restraints of temperance and decorum. No was his muse dormant. In the four years which he lived in Dumfries, he produced many of his beautiful lyrics, though it does not appear that he attempted any poem of considerable length. During this time, he made several excursions into the neighbouring country, of one of which, through Galloway, an account is preserved in a letter of Mr. Syme, written soon after, which, as it gives an animated picture of him by a correct and masterly hand, we shall present to the reader.

"I got Burns a grey Highland shelty to ride on. We dined the first day, 27th July, 1793, at Glendenwynes of Parton; a beautiful situation on the banks of the Dee. In the evening, we walked out and ascended a gentle eminence, from which we had as fine a view of Alpine scenery as can well be imagined. A delightful soft evening showed all its wilder as well as its grander graces. Immediately opposite, and within a mile of us, we saw Airds, a charming romantic place, where dwelt Low, the author of *Mary weep no more for me**. This was classical ground for Burns. He viewed "the highest hill, which rises o'er the source of Dee;" and would have staid till the "passing spirit" had appeared, had we not resolved to reach Kenmore that night. We arrived at Mr. and Mrs. Gordon were sitting down to supper.

"Here is a genuine baron's seat. The castle, an old building, stands on a large natural moat. In front, the river Ken winds for several miles through the most fertile and beautiful *holm*†; till it expands into a lake twelve miles long, the banks of which on the south present a fine and soft landscape of green knolls, natural wood, and here and there a grey rock. On the north, the aspect is great, wild, and, I may say, tremendous. In short, I can scarcely conceive a scene more terribly romantic than the castle of Kenmore. Burns thinks so highly of it, that he meditates a description of it in poetry. Indeed, I believe he has begun the work. We spent three days with Mr. Gordon, whose polished hospitality is of an original and endearing kind. Mrs. Gordon's lap-dog *Echo* was dead. She would have an epitaph for him. Several had been made. Burns was asked for one. This was setting Hercules to his distaff. He disliked the subject, but, to please the lady, he would try. Here is what he produced.

In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,
Your heavy loss deplore;
Now half extinct your powers of song,
Sweet Echo is no more.

Ye jarring screeching things around,
Scream your discordant joys;
Now half your din of tuneless sound
With Echo silent lies.

"We left Kenmore, and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor-road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became louring and dark. The hollow winds sighed, the lightnings gleamed, the thunder rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene—he spoke not a word, but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall; it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements *rumble their belly-full* upon our defenceless heads. *Oh, oh! 'twas foul.* We got utterly wet, and, to revenge ourselves, Burns insisted at Gatehouse, on our getting utterly drunk.

"From Gatehouse we went next day to Kirkudbright, through a fine country. But here I must tell you that Burns had got a pair of *jemmy* boots for the journey, which had been thoroughly wet, and which had been dried in such a manner, that it was not possible to get them on again. The brawny poet tried force, and tore them to shreds. A whiffling vexation of this sort is more trying to the temper than a serious calamity. We were going to Saint Mary's Isle, the seat of the earl of Selkirk, and the forlorn Burns was discomfited at the thought of his ruined boots. A sick stomach, and a head-ache, lent their aid, and the man of verse was quite *accablé*. I attempted to reason with him. Mercy on us, how he did fume and rage! Nothing could re-instate him in temper. I tried various expedients, and at last hit on one that succeeded. I showed him the house of * * * *, across the bay of Wigton. Against * * * *, with whom he was offended, he expectorated his spleen, and regained a most agreeable temper. He was in a most epigrammatic humour indeed! He afterwards fell on humbler game. There is one * * * * * * whom he does not love. He had a passing blow at him.

When * * * * * *, deceased, to the devil went down,
'Twas nothing would serve him but Satan's own crown:
Thy fool's head, quoth Satan, that crown shall wear never,
I grant thou'rt as wicked, but not quite so clever.

"Well, I am to bring you to Kirkudbright along with our poet without boots. I carried the torn ruins across my saddle in spite of his fulminations, and in contempt of appearances; and,

* A beautiful and well-known ballad, which begins thus:

The moon had climb'd the highest hill,
Which rises o'er the source of Dee;
And, from the eastern summit, shed
Its silver light on tower and tree.

† The level low-ground on the banks of a river or stream. This word should be adopted from the Scottish, as, indeed, ought several others of the same nature. That dialect is singularly copious and exact in the denominations of natural objects. E.

what is more, lord Selkirk carried them in his coach to Dumfries. He insisted they were worth mending.

" We reached Kirkudbright about one o'clock. I had promised that we should dine with one of the first men in our country, J. Dalzell. But Burns was in a wild and obstreperous humour, and swore he would not dine where he should be under the smallest restraint. We prevailed, therefore, on Mr. Dalzell to dine with us in the inn, and had a very agreeable party. In the evening we set out for St. Mary's Isle. Robert had not absolutely regained the milkiness of good temper, and it occurred once or twice to him, as he rode along, that St. Mary's Isle was the seat of a lord; yet, that lord was not an aristocrat, at least in his sense of the word. We arrived about eight o'clock, as the family were at tea and coffee. St. Mary's Isle is one of the most delightful places that can, in my opinion, be formed by the assemblage of every soft, but not tame object, which constitutes natural and cultivated beauty. But not to dwell on its external graces, let me tell you that we found all the ladies of the family (all beautiful) at home, and some strangers; and among others, who but Urbani. The Italian sung us many Scottish songs, accompanied with instrumental music. The two young ladies of Selkirk sung also. We had the song of Lord Gregory, which I asked for, to have an opportunity of calling on Burns to recite *his* ballad to that tune. He did recite it; and such was the effect, that a dead silence ensued. It was such a silence as a mind of feeling naturally preserves when it is touched with that enthusiasm which banishes every other thought but the contemplation and indulgence of the sympathy produced. Burns' Lord Gregory is, in my opinion, a most beautiful and affecting ballad*. The fastidious critic may, perhaps, say some of the sentiments and imagery are of too elevated a kind for such a style of composition; for instance, " Thou bolt of heaven that passest by;" and " Ye mustering thunders," &c., but this is a cold-blooded objection, which will be *said* rather than *felt*.

" We enjoyed a most happy evening at lord Selkirk's. We had in every sense of the word a feast, in which our minds and our senses were equally gratified. The poet was delighted with his company, and acquitted himself to admiration. The lion that had raged so violently in the morning, was now as mild and gentle as a lamb. Next day we returned to Dumfries, and so ends our peregrination. I told you that in the midst of the storm on the wilds of Kenmore, Burns was rapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English army along with Bruce, at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner on our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the following address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell.

" Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," &c.†

Burns had entertained hopes of promotion in the excise; but circumstances occurred which retarded their fulfilment, and which in his own mind destroyed all expectation of their being ever fulfilled. The extraordinary events which ushered in the revolution of France, interested the feelings, and excited the hopes of men in every corner of Europe. Prejudice and tyranny seemed about to disappear from among men, and the day-star of reason to rise upon a benighted world. In the dawn of this beautiful morning the genius of French freedom appeared on our southern horizon with the countenance of an angel, but speedily assumed the features of a demon, and vanished in a shower of blood.

Though previously a jacobite and a cavalier, Burns had shared in the original hopes entertained of this astonishing revolution by ardent and benevolent minds. The novelty and the hazard of the attempt meditated by the First or Constituent Assembly, served rather, it is probable, to recommend it to his daring temper; and the unfettered scope proposed to be given to every kind of talents, was doubtless gratifying to the feelings of conscious but indignant genius. Burns foresaw not the mighty ruin that was to be the immediate consequence of an enterprize, which, on its commencement, promised so much happiness to the human race. And even after the career of guilt and of blood commenced, he could not immediately, it may be presumed, withdraw his partial gaze from a people who had so lately breathed the sentiments of universal peace and benignity, or obliterate in his bosom the pictures of hope and of happiness to which those sentiments had given birth. Under these impressions, he did not always conduct himself with the circumspection and prudence which his dependent situation seemed to demand. He engaged, indeed, in no popular associations, so common at the time of which we speak; but, in company, he did not conceal his opinions of public measures, or of the reforms required in the practice of our government: and sometimes, in his social and unguarded moments, he uttered them with a wild and unjustifiable vehemence. Information of this was given to the board of excise, with the exaggerations so general in such cases. A superior officer in that department was authorized to inquire into his conduct. Burns defended himself in a letter addressed to one of the board, written with great independence of spirit, and with more than his accustomed eloquence. The officer appointed to inquire into his conduct, gave a favourable report. His steady friend, Mr. Graham of Fintry, interposed his good offices in his behalf; and the imprudent gauger was suffered to retain his situation, but given to understand that his promotion was deferred, and must depend on his future behaviour.

This circumstance made a deep impression on the mind of Burns. Fame exaggerated his misconduct, and represented him as actually dismissed from his office. And this report induced a gentleman of much respectability to propose a subscription in his favour. The offer was refused by our poet in a letter of great elevation of sentiment, in which he gives an account of the whole

* *See Correspondence with Mr. Thomson, No.* XII.

† *Ibid. No.* XLIII.

of this transaction, and defends himself from the imputation of disloyal sentiments on the one hand, and, on the other, from the charge of having made submissions, for the sake of his office, unworthy of his character.

"The partiality of my countrymen," he observes, "has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the poet I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I hope have been found in the man. Reasons of no less weight than the support of a wife and children, have pointed out my present occupation, as the only eligible line of life within my reach. Still my honest fame is my dearest concern, and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of the degrading epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name. Often in blasting anticipation have I listened to some future hackney scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exultingly asserting that Burns, notwithstanding the *fanfaronade* of independence to be found in his works, and after having been held up to public view, and to public estimation, as a man of some genius, yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, dwindled into a paltry exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and amongst the lowest of mankind.

"In your illustrious hands, sir, permit me to lodge my strong disavowal and defiance of such slanderous falsehoods. Burns was a poor man from his birth, and an exciseman by necessity: but—I *will* say it! the sterling of his honest worth poverty could not debase, and his independent British spirit, oppression might bend, but could not subdue."

It was one of the last acts of his life to copy this letter into his book of manuscripts, accompanied by some additional remarks on the same subject. It is not surprising, that, at a season of universal alarm for the safety of the constitution, the indiscreet expressions of a man so powerful as Burns, should have attracted notice. The times certainly required extraordinary vigilance in those entrusted with the administration of the government, and to ensure the safety of the constitution was doubtless their first duty. Yet, generous minds will lament that their measures of precaution should have robbed the imagination of our poet of the last prop on which his hopes of independence rested, and, by embittering his peace, have aggravated those excesses which were soon to conduct him to an untimely grave.

Though the vehemence of Burns' temper, increased as it often was by stimulating liquors, might lead him into many improper and unguarded expressions, there seems no reason to doubt of his attachment to our mixed form of government. In his common-place book, where he could have no temptation to disguise, are the following sentiments.—"Whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I ever abjured the idea. A constitution, which, in its original principles, experience has proved to be every way fitted for our happiness, it would be insanity to abandon for an untried visionary theory." In conformity to these sentiments, when the pressing nature of public affairs called, in 1795, for a general arming of the people, Burns appeared in the ranks of the Dumfries volunteers, and employed his poetical talents in stimulating their patriotism*; and at this season of alarm, he brought forward the following hymn, worthy of the Grecian muse, when Greece was most conspicuous for genius and valour.

Scene—a field of battle—time of the day, evening—the wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following song.

Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies,
Now gay with the bright setting sun;
Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear tender ties,
Our race of existence is run!

Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go, frighten the coward and slave;
Go, teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know,
No terrors hast thou to the brave!

Thou strik'st the dull peasant, he sinks in the dark,
Nor saves e'en the wreck of a name;
Thou strik'st the young hero—a glorious mark!
He falls in the blaze of his fame!

In the field of proud honour—our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save—
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands,
Oh! who would not rest with the brave†!

Though by nature of an athletic form, Burns had in his constitution the peculiarities and the delicacies that belong to the temperament of genius. He was liable, from a very early period of life, to that interruption in the process of digestion, which arises from deep and anxious thought, and which is sometimes the effect, and sometimes the cause of depression of spirits. Connected with this disorder of the stomach, there was a disposition to head-ache, affecting more especially the temples and eye-balls, and frequently accompanied by violent and irregular movements of the

* *See Poems.*

† This poem was written in 1791. *See General Correspondence, No.* CXXV. It was printed in *Johnson's Musical Museum.* The poet had an intention, in the latter part of his life, of printing it separately, set to music, but was advised against it; or at least discouraged from it. The martial ardour which rose so high afterwards, on the threatened invasion, had not then acquired the tone necessary to give popularity to this noble poem; which, to the editor, seems more calculated to invigorate the spirit of defence, in a season of real and pressing danger, than any production of modern times. It is here printed with his last corrections, varied a little from the copy followed in the poems.

heart. Endowed by nature with great sensibility of nerves, Burns was, in his corporeal, as well as in his mental system, liable to inordinate impressions; to fever of body, as well as of mind. This predisposition to disease, which strict temperance in diet, regular exercise, and sound sleep, might have subdued, habits of a very different nature strengthened and inflamed. Perpetually stimulated by alkohol in one or other of its various forms, the inordinate actions of the circulating system became at length habitual; the process of nutrition was unable to supply the waste, and the powers of life began to fail. Upwards of a year before his death, there was an evident decline in our poet's personal appearance, and though his appetite continued unimpaired, he was himself sensible that his constitution was sinking. In his moments of thought, he reflected with the deepest regret on his fatal progress, clearly foreseeing the goal towards which he was hastening, without the strength of mind necessary to stop, or even to slacken his course. His temper now became more irritable and gloomy; he fled from himself into society, often of the lowest kind. And in such company that part of the convivial scene, in which wine increases sensibility and excites benevolence, was hurried over, to reach the succeeding part, over which uncontrouled passion generally presided. He who suffers the pollution of inebriation, how shall he escape other-pollution? But let us refrain from the mention of errors over which delicacy and humanity draw the veil.

In the midst of all his wanderings, Burns met nothing in his domestic circle but gentleness and forgiveness, except in the gnawings of his own remorse. He acknowledged his transgressions to the wife of his bosom, promised amendment, and again and again received pardon for his offences. But, as the strength of his body decayed, his resolution became feebler, and habit acquired predominating strength.

From October, 1795, to the January following, an accidental complaint confined him to the house. A few days after he began to go abroad, he dined at a tavern, and returned home about three o'clock in a very cold morning, benumbed and intoxicated. This was followed by an attack of rheumatism, which confined him about a week. His appetite now began to fail; his hand shook, and his voice faltered on any exertion or emotion. His pulse became weaker and more rapid, and pain in the larger joints, and in the hands and feet, deprived him of the enjoyment of refreshing sleep. Too much dejected in his spirits, and too well aware of his real situation to entertain hopes of recovery, he was ever musing on the approaching desolation of his family, and his spirits sunk into an uniform gloom.

It was hoped by some of his friends, that if he could live through the months of spring, the succeeding season might restore him. But they were disappointed. The genial beams of the sun infused no vigour into his languid frame; the summer wind blew upon him, but produced no refreshment. About the latter end of June he was advised to go into the country, and, impatient of medical advice, as well as of every species of controul, he determined for himself to try the effects of bathing in the sea. For this purpose he took up his residence at Brow, in Annandale, about ten miles east of Dumfries, on the shore of the Solway-Firth.

It happened that, at that time, a lady with whom he had been connected in friendship by the sympathies of kindred genius, was residing in the immediate neighbourhood*. Being informed of his arrival, she invited him to dinner, and sent her carriage for him to the cottage where he lodged, as he was unable to walk.—"I was struck," says this lady (in a confidential letter to a friend, written soon after), "with his appearance on entering the room. The stamp of death was impressed on his features. He seemed already touching the brink of eternity. His first salutation was, 'Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?' I replied, that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest, and that I hoped he would yet live to write my epitaph. (I was then in a bad state of health). He looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me look so ill, with his accustomed sensibility. At table he ate little or nothing, and he complained of having entirely lost the tone of his stomach. We had a long and serious conversation about his present situation, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death without any of the ostentation of philosophy, but with firmness as well as feeling—as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four children so young and unprotected, and his wife in so interesting a situation—in hourly expectation of lying in of a fifth. He mentioned, with seeming pride and satisfaction, the promising genius of his eldest son, and the flattering marks of approbation he had received from his teachers, and dwelt particularly on his hopes of that boy's future conduct and merit. His anxiety for his family seemed to hang heavy upon him, and the more, perhaps, from the reflection that he had not done them all the justice he was so well qualified to do. Passing from this subject, he showed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works. He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation: that letters and verses written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would be handed about by idle vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent the censures of shrill-tongued malice, or the insidious sarcasms of envy, from pouring forth all their venom to blast his fame.

"He lamented that he had written many epigrams on persons against whom he entertained no enmity, and whose characters he should be sorry to wound; and many indifferent poetical

* For a character of this lady, *see General Correspondence, No.* CXXVII.

pieces which he feared would now, with all their imperfections on their head, be thrust upon the world. On this account he deeply regretted having deferred to put his papers into a state of arrangement, as he was now quite incapable of the exertion."—The lady goes on to mention many other topics of a private nature, on which he spoke.—"The conversation," she adds, "was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. I had seldom seen his mind greater or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share, had not the concern and dejection I could not disguise, damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed not unwilling to indulge.

"We parted about sun-set on the evening of that day (the 5th of July, 1796); the next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more!"

At first Burns imagined bathing in the sea had been of benefit to him: the pains in his limbs were relieved; but this was immediately followed by a new attack of fever. When brought back to his own house in Dumfries, on the 18th of July, he was no longer able to stand upright. At this time a tremour pervaded his frame; his tongue was parched, and his mind sunk into delirium, when not roused by conversation. On the second and third day the fever increased, and his strength diminished. On the fourth, the sufferings of this great, but ill-fated genius were terminated, and a life was closed in which virtue and passion had been at perpetual variance*.

The death of Burns made a strong and general impression on all who had interested themselves in his character, and especially on the inhabitants of the town and country in which he had spent the latter years of his life. Flagrant as his follies and errors had been, they had not deprived him of the respect and regard entertained for the extraordinary powers of his genius, and the generous qualities of his heart. The Gentlemen Volunteers of Dumfries determined to bury their illustrious associate with military honours, and every preparation was made to render this last service solemn and impressive. The Fencible Infantry of Angusshire, and the regiment of cavalry of the Cinque Ports, at that time quartered in Dumfries, offered their assistance on this occasion; the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood determined to walk in the funeral procession; and a vast concourse of persons assembled, some of them from a considerable distance, to witness the obsequies of the Scottish bard. On the evening of the 25th of July, the remains of Burns were removed from his house to the Town-Hall, and the funeral took place on the succeeding day. A party of the volunteers selected to perform the military duty in the church-yard, stationed themselves in the front of the procession, with their arms reversed; the main body of the corps surrounded and supported the coffin, on which were placed the hat and sword of their friend and fellow-soldier; the numerous body of attendants ranged themselves in the rear; while the fencible regiments of infantry and cavalry lined the streets from the Town-Hall to the burial-ground in the Southern church-yard, a distance of more than half a mile. The whole procession moved forward to that sublime and affecting strain of music, the *Dead March* in Saul; and three vollies fired over his grave, marked the return of Burns to his parent earth! The spectacle was, in a high degree, grand and solemn, and accorded with the general sentiments of sympathy and sorrow which the occasion had called forth.

It was an affecting circumstance, that, on the morning of the day of her husband's funeral, Mrs. Burns was undergoing the pains of labour, and that during the solemn service we have just been describing, the posthumous son of our poet was born. This infant boy, who received the name of Maxwell, was not destined to a long life. He has already become an inhabitant of the same grave with his celebrated father. The four other children of our poet, all sons (the eldest at that time about ten years of age), yet survive, and give every promise of prudence and virtue that can be expected from their tender years. They remain under the care of their affectionate mother in Dumfries, and are enjoying the means of education which the excellent schools of that town afford; the teachers of which, in their conduct to the children of Burns, do themselves great honour. On this occasion, the name of Mr. Whyte deserves to be particularly mentioned, himself a poet as well as a man of science*.

Burns died in great poverty, but the independence of his spirit, and the exemplary prudence of his wife, had preserved him from debt. He had received from his poems a clear profit of about nine hundred pounds. Of this sum, the part expended on his library (which was far from extensive) and in the humble furniture of his house, remained; and obligations were found for two hundred pounds advanced by him for the assistance of those to whom he was united by the ties of blood, and still more by those of esteem and affection. When it is considered that his expenses in Edinburgh, and on his various journeys, could not be inconsiderable; that his agricultural undertaking was unsuccessful; that his income from the excise was for some time as low as fifty, and never rose to above seventy pounds a year; that his family was large, and his spirit liberal—no one will be surprised that his circumstances were so poor, or that, as his health decayed, his proud and feeling heart sunk under the secret consciousness of indigence, and the apprehensions of absolute want. Yet, poverty never bent the spirit of Burns to any pecuniary meanness. Neither chicanery nor sordidness ever appeared in his conduct. He carried his disregard of money to a blameable excess. Even in the midst of distress he bore himself loftily to the world, and received with a jealous reluctance every offer of friendly assistance. His printed poems had procured him

* The particulars respecting the illness and death of Burns, were obligingly furnished by Dr. Maxwell, the physician who attended him.

* Author of *St. Guerdon's Well*, a poem, and of *A Tribute to the Memory of Burns*.

great celebrity, and a just and fair recompense for the latter offsprings of his pen, might have produced him considerable emolument. In the year 1795, the editor of a London newspaper, high in its character for literature and independence of sentiment, made a proposal to him, that he should furnish them once a week with an article for their poetical department, and receive from them a recompense of fifty-two guineas per annum; an offer which the pride of genius disdained to accept. Yet, he had for several years furnished, and was at that time furnishing, the *Museum* of Johnson with his beautiful lyrics, without fee or reward, and was obstinately refusing all recompense for his assistance to the greater work of Mr. Thomson, which the justice and generosity of that gentleman was pressing upon him.

The sense of his poverty, and of the approaching distress of his infant family, pressed heavily on Burns as he lay on the bed of death. Yet, he alluded to his indigence, at times, with something approaching to his wonted gaiety.—"What business," said he to Dr. Maxwell, who attended him with the utmost zeal, "has a physician to waste his time on me? I am a poor pidgeon not worth plucking. Alas! I have not feathers enough upon me to carry me to my grave." And when his reason was lost in delirium, his ideas ran in the same melancholy train; the horrors of a jail were continually present to his troubled imagination, and produced the most affecting exclamations.

As for some months previous to his death he had been incapable of the duties of his office, Burns dreaded that his salary should be reduced one half, as is usual in such cases. His full emoluments were, however, continued to him by the kindness of Mr. Stobbie, a young expectant in the excise, who performed the duties of his office without fee or reward*; and Mr. Graham of Fintry, hearing of his illness, though unacquainted with its dangerous nature, made an offer of his assistance towards procuring him the means of preserving his health.—Whatever might be the faults of Burns, ingratitude was not of the number. Amongst his manuscripts, various proofs are found of the sense he entertained of Mr. Graham's friendship, which delicacy towards that gentleman has induced us to suppress; and, on this last occasion, there is no doubt that his heart overflowed towards him, though he had no longer the power of expressing his feelings†.

On the death of Burns, the inhabitants of Dumfries and its neighbourhood, opened a subscription for the support of his wife and family, and Mr. Miller, Mr. M'Murdo, Dr. Maxwell, Mr. Syme, and Mr. Cunningham, gentlemen of the first respectability, became trustees for the application of the money to its proper objects. The subscription was extended to other parts of Scotland, and of England also, particularly London and Liverpool. By this means a sum was raised amounting to seven hundred pounds, and thus the widow and children were rescued from immediate distress, and the most melancholy of the forebodings of Burns happily disappointed. It is true, this sum, though equal to their present support, is insufficient to secure them from future penury. Their hope, in regard to futurity, depends on the favourable reception of these volumes from the public at large, in the promoting of which, the candour and humanity of the reader may induce him to lend his assistance.

Burns, as has already been mentioned, was nearly five feet ten inches in height, and of a form that indicated agility as well as strength. His well-raised forehead, shaded with black curling hair, indicated extensive capacity. His eyes were large, dark, full of ardour and intelligence. His face was well formed; and his countenance uncommonly interesting and expressive. His mode of dressing, which was often slovenly, and a certain fulness and bend in his shoulders, characteristic of his original profession, disguised in some degree the natural symmetry and elegance of his form. The external appearance of Burns was most strikingly indicative of the character of his mind. On a first view, his physiognomy had a certain air of coarseness, mingled, however, with an expression of deep penetration, and of calm thoughtfulness approaching to melancholy. There appeared in his first manner and address perfect ease and self-possession, but a stern and almost supercilious elevation, not indeed incompatible with openness and affability, which, however, bespoke a mind conscious of superior talents. Strangers that supposed themselves approaching an Ayrshire peasant, who could make rhymes, and to whom their notice was an honour, found themselves speedily overawed by the presence of a man who bore himself with dignity, and who possessed a singular power of correcting forwardness and of repelling intrusion. But, though jealous of the respect due to himself, Burns never enforced it where he saw it was willingly paid; and though inaccessible to the approaches of pride, he was open to every advance of kindness and of benevolence. His dark and haughty countenance easily relaxed into a look of good will, of pity, or of tenderness; and as the various emotions succeeded each other in his mind, assumed with equal ease the expression of the broadest humour, of the most extravagant mirth, of the deepest melancholy, or of the most sublime emotion. The tones of his voice happily corresponded with the expression of his features, and with the feelings of his mind. When to these endowments are added, a rapid and distinct apprehension, a most powerful understanding, and a happy command of language —of strength as well as brilliancy of expression— we shall be able to account for the extraordinary attractions of his conversation—for the sorcery which, in his social parties, he seemed to exert on all around him. In the company of women, this sorcery was more especially apparent. Their pre-

* In the first edition it is supposed, that the board of excise deviated from their usual rule (a shocking rule it is!) in our poet's favour. It appears, on better information, that the members of that board were not guilty of any such weakness.

† The letter of Mr. Graham, alluded to above, is dated on the 13th of July, and probably arrived on the 15th. Burns became delirious on the 17th or 18th, and died on the 21st.

sence charmed the fiend of melancholy in his bosom, and awoke his happiest feelings; it excited the powers of his fancy, as well as the tenderness of his heart; and, by restraining the vehemence and the exuberance of his language, at times gave to his manners the impression of taste, and even of elegance, which, in the company of men, they seldom possessed. This influence was doubtless reciprocal. A Scottish lady, accustomed to the best society, declared, with characteristic *naiveté*, that no man's conversation ever *carried her so completely off her feet* as that of Burns; and an English lady, familiarly acquainted with several of the most distinguished characters of the present times, assured the editor, that, in the happiest of his social hours, there was a charm about Burns which she had never seen equalled. This charm arose not more from the power, than the versatility of his genius. No languor could be felt in the society of a man who passed at pleasure from *grave to gay*, from the ludierous to the pathetic, from the simple to the sublime; who wielded all his faculties with equal strength and ease, and never failed to impress the offspring of his fancy with the stamp of his understanding.

This, indeed, is to represent Burns in his happiest phasis. In large and mixed parties he was often silent and dark, sometimes fierce and overbearing; he was jealous of the proud man's scorn, jealous to an extreme of the insolence of wealth, and prone to avenge, even on its innocent possessor, the partiality of fortune. By nature kind, brave, sincere, and, in a singular degree, compassionate, he was, on the other hand, proud, irascible, and vindictive. His virtues and his failings had their origin in the extraordinary sensibility of his mind, and equally partook of the chills and glows of sentiment. His friendships were liable to interruption from jealousy or disgust, and his enmities died away under the influence of pity or self-accusation. His understanding was equal to the other powers of his mind, and his deliberate opinions were singularly candid and just; but, like other men of great and irregular genius, the opinions which he delivered in conversation were often the offspring of temporary feelings, and widely different from the calm decisions of his judgment. This was not merely true respecting the characters of others, but in regard to some of the most important points of human speculation.

On no subject did he give a more striking proof of the strength of his understanding, than in the correct estimate he formed of himself. He knew his own failings; he predicted their consequence; the melancholy foreboding was never long absent from his mind; yet his passions carried him down the stream of error, and swept him over the precipice he saw directly in his course. The fatal defect in his character lay in the comparative weakness of his volition, that superior faculty of the mind, which, governing the conduct according to the dictates of the understanding, alone entitles it to be denominated rational; which is the parent of fortitude, patience, and self-denial; which, by regulating and combining human exertions, may be said to have effected all that is great in the works of man, in literature, in science, or on the face of nature. The occupations of a poet are not calculated to strengthen the governing powers of the mind, or to weaken that sensibility which requires perpetual controul, since it gives birth to the vehemence of passion, as well as to the higher powers of imagination. Unfortunately the favourite occupations of genius are calculated to increase all its peculiarities; to nourish that lofty pride which disdains the littleness of prudence, and the restrictions of order; and, by indulgence, to increase that sensibility, which, in the present form of our existence, is scarcely compatible with peace or happiness, even when accompanied with the choicest gifts of fortune!

It is observed by one who was a friend and associate of Burns*, and who has contemplated and explained the system of animated nature, that no sentient being, with mental powers greatly superior to those of men, could possibly live and be happy in this world.—"If such a being really existed," continues he, "his misery would be extreme. With senses more delicate and refined; with perceptions more acute and penetrating; with a taste so exquisite, that the objects around him would by no means gratify it; obliged to feed on nourishment too gross for his frame; he must be born only to be miserable, and the continuation of his existence would be utterly impossible. Even in our present condition, the sameness and the insipidity of objects and pursuits, the futility of pleasure, and the infinite sources of excruciating pain, are supported with great difficulty by cultivated and refined minds. Increase our sensibilities, continue the same objects and situation, and no man could bear to live."

Thus it appears that our powers of sensation, as well as all our other powers, are adapted to the scene of our existence; that they are limited in mercy, as well as in wisdom.

The speculations of Mr. Smellie are not to be considered as the dreams of a theorist; they were probably founded on sad experience. The being he supposes, "with senses more delicate and refined, with perceptions more acute and penetrating," is to be found in real life. He is of the temperament of genius, and perhaps a poet. Is there then no remedy for this inordinate sensibility? Are there no means by which the happiness of one so constituted by nature may be consulted? Perhaps it will be found, that regular and constant occupation, irksome though it may at first be, is the true remedy. Occupation in which the powers of the understanding are exercised, will diminish the force of external impressions, and keep the imagination under restraint.

That the bent of every man's mind should be followed in his education and in his destination in life, is a maxim which has been often repeated, but which cannot be admitted without many restrictions. It may be generally true when applied to weak minds, which, being capable of little,

* Smellie—See his *Philosophy of Natural History, vol.* i. *p.* 526.

must be encouraged and strengthened in the feeble impulses by which that little is produced. But where indulgent nature has bestowed her gifts with a liberal hand, the very reverse of this maxim ought frequently to be the rule of conduct. In minds of a higher order, the object of instruction and of discipline is very often to restrain rather than to impel; to curb the impulses of imagination, so that the passions also may be kept under controul*. Hence the advantages, even in a moral point of view, of studies of a severer nature, which, while they inform the understanding, employ the volition, that regulating power of the mind, which, like all our other faculties, is strengthened by exercise, and on the superiority of which, virtue, happiness, and honourable fame, are wholly dependent. Hence, also, the advantage of regular and constant application, which aids the voluntary power by the production of habits, so necessary to the support of order and virtue, and so difficult to be formed in the temperament of genius.

The man who is so endowed and so regulated, may pursue his course with confidence in almost any of the various walks of life, which choice or accident shall open to him; and, provided he employs the talents he has cultivated, may hope for such imperfect happiness, and such limited success, as are reasonably to be expected from human exertions.

The pre-eminence among men, which procures personal respect, and which terminates in lasting reputation, is seldom or never obtained by the excellence of a single faculty of mind. Experience teaches us that it has been acquired by those only, who have possessed the comprehension and the energy of general talents, and who have regulated their application, in the line which choice or perhaps accident may have determined, by the dictates of their judgment. Imagination is supposed, and with justice, to be the leading faculty of the poet. But what poet has stood the test of time by the force of this single faculty? Who does not see that Homer and Shakespeare excelled the rest of their species in understanding as well as in imagination; that they were pre-eminent in the highest species of knowledge—the knowledge of the nature and character of man? On the other hand, the talent of ratiocination is more especially requisite to the orator; but no man ever obtained the palm of oratory, even by the highest excellence in this single talent. Who does not perceive that Demosthenes and Cicero were not more happy in their addresses to the reason, than in their appeals to the passions? They knew that to excite, to agitate, and to delight, are among the most potent arts of persuasion; and they enforced their impression on the understanding, by their command of all the sympathies of the heart. These observations might be extended to other walks of life. He who has the faculties fitted to excel in poetry, has the faculties which, duly governed and differently directed, might lead to pre-eminence in other, and, as far as respects himself, perhaps in happier destinations. The talents necessary to the construction of an Iliad, under different discipline and application, might have led armies to victory, or kingdoms to prosperity; might have wielded the thunder of eloquence, or discovered and enlarged the sciences that constitute the power, and improve the condition of our species*. Such talents

* Quinctilian discusses the important question, whether the bent of the individual's genius should be followed in his education *(an secundum suî quisque ingenii docendus sit naturam)*, chiefly, indeed, with a reference to the orator, but in a way that admits of very general application. His conclusions coincide very much with those of the text. *An vero Isocrates cum de Ephoro atque Theompompo sic judicaret, ut* alteri frenis, alteri calcaribus opus esse *diceret; aut in illo lentiore tarditatem, aut in illo pene præcipiti concitationem adjuvandum docendo existimavit? cum alterum alterius natura miscendum arbitraretur. Imbecillis tamen ingeniis sane sic obsequendum sit, ut tantum in id quo vocat natura, ducantur. Ita enim, quod solum possunt, melius efficient.*

Instit. Orator. lib. ii. 9.

* The reader must not suppose it is contended, that the same individual could have excelled in all these directions. A certain degree of instruction and practice is necessary to excellence in every one, and life is too short to admit of one man, however great his talents, acquiring this, in all of them. It is only asserted, that the same talents, differently applied, might have succeeded in *any one*, though perhaps not equally well in each. And, after all, this position requires certain limitations, which the reader's candour and judgment will supply. In supposing that a great poet might have made a great orator, the physical qualities necessary to oratory are pre-supposed. In supposing that a great orator might have made a great poet, it is a necessary condition that he should have devoted himself to poetry, and that he should have acquired a proficiency in metrical numbers, which by patience and attention may be acquired, though the want of it has embarrassed and chilled many of the first efforts of true poetical genius. In supposing that Homer might have led armies to victory, more indeed is assumed than the physical qualities of a general. To these must be added that hardihood of mind, that coolness in the midst of difficulty and danger, which great poets and orators are found sometimes, but not always, to possess. The nature of the institutions of Greece and Rome, produced more instances of single individuals who excelled in various departments of active and speculative life, than occur in modern Europe, where the employments of men are more subdivided. Many of the greatest warriors of antiquity excelled in literature and in oratory. That they had the *minds* of great poets also, will be admitted, when the qualities are justly appreciated which are necessary to excite, combine, and command the active energies of a great body of men, to rouse that enthusiasm which sustains fatigue, hunger, and the inclemencies of the elements, and which triumphs over the fear of death, the most powerful instinct of our nature.

are, indeed, rare among the productions of nature, and occasions of bringing them into full exertion are rarer still. But safe and salutary occupations may be found for men of genius in every direction, while the useful and ornamental arts remain to be cultivated, while the sciences remain to be studied and to be extended, and the principles of science to be applied to the correction and improvement of art. In the temperament of sensibility, which is, in truth, the temperament of general talents, the principal object of discipline and instruction, is, as has already been mentioned, to strengthen the self-command; and this may be promoted by the direction of the studies, more effectually perhaps than has been generally understood.

If these observations be founded in truth, they may lead to practical consequences of some importance. It has been too much the custom to consider the possession of poetical talents as excluding the possibility of application to the severer branches of study, and as in some degree incapacitating the possessor from attaining those habits, and from bestowing that attention, which are necessary to success in the details of business, and in the engagements of active life. It has been common for persons conscious of such talents, to look with a sort of disdain on other kinds of intellectual excellence, and to consider themselves as in some degree absolved from those rules of prudence by which humbler minds are restricted. They are too much disposed to abandon themselves to their own sensations, and to suffer life to pass away without regular exertion or settled purpose.

But though men of genius are generally prone to indolence, with them indolence and unhappiness are in a more especial manner allied. The unbidden splendors of imagination may indeed at times irradiate the gloom which inactivity produces; but such visions, though bright, are transient, and serve to cast the realities of life into deeper shade. In bestowing great talents, nature seems very generally to have imposed on the possessor the necessity of exertion, if he would escape wretchedness. Better for him than sloth, toils the most painful, or adventures the most hazardous. Happier to him than idleness, were the condition of the peasant, earning with incessant labour his scanty food; or that of the sailor, though hanging on the yard-arm, and wrestling with the hurricane.

These observations might be amply illustrated by the biography of men of genius of every denomination, and more especially by the biography of the poets. Of this last description of men, few seem to have enjoyed the usual portion of happiness that falls to the lot of humanity, those excepted who have cultivated poetry as an elegant amusement in the hours of relaxation from other occupations, or the small number who have engaged with success in the greater or more arduous attempts of the muse, in which all the faculties of the mind have been fully and permanently employed. Even taste, virtue, and comparative independence, do not seem capable of bestowing on men of genius peace and tranquillity, without such occupation as may give regular and healthful exercise to the faculties of body and mind. The amiable Shenstone has left us the records of his imprudence, of his indolence, and of his unhappiness, amidst the shades of the Leasowes*; and the virtues, the learning, and the genius of Gray, equal to the loftiest attempts of the epic muse, failed to procure him in the academic bowers of Cambridge, that tranquillity and that respect, which less fastidiousness of taste, and greater constancy and vigour of exertion, would have doubtless obtained.

It is more necessary that men of genius should

The authority of Cicero may be appealed to in favour of the close connexion between the poet and the orator. *Est enim finitimus oratori poeta, numeris adstrictior paulo, verborum autem licentia liberior*, &c.—De Orator. Lib. i. c. 16. See also lib. iii. c. 7.—It is true, the example of Cicero may be quoted against his opinion. His attempts in verse, which are praised by Plutarch, do not seem to have met the approbation of Juvenal, or of some others. Cicero probably did not take sufficient time to learn the art of the poet; but that he had the *afflatus* necessary to poetical excellence, may be abundantly proved from his compositions in prose. On the other hand, nothing is more clear, than that in the character of a great poet, all the mental qualities of an orator are included. It is said by Quinctilian, of Homer, *Omnibus eloquentiæ partibus exemplum et ortum dedit*, lib. i. 47. The study of Homer is, therefore, recommended to the orator as of the first importance. Of the two sublime poets in our own language, who are hardly inferior to Homer, Shakespeare and Milton, a similar recommendation may be given. It is scarcely necessary to mention how much an acquaintance with them has availed the great orator, who is now the pride and ornament of the English bar, a character that may be appealed to with singular propriety, when we are contending for the universality of genius.

The identity, or at least the great similarity, of the talents necessary to *excellence* in poetry, oratory, painting, and war, will be admitted by some, who will be inclined to dispute the extension of the position to science or natural knowledge. On this occasion I may quote the following observations of sir William Jones, whose own example will, however, far exceed in weight the authority of his precepts. "Abul Ola had so flourishing a reputation, that several persons of uncommon genius were ambitious of learning the *art of poetry* from so able an instructor. His most illustrious scholars were Feleki and Khakani, who were no less eminent for their Persian compositions, than for their skill in every branch of pure and mixed mathematics, and particularly in astronomy; a striking proof that a sublime poet may become master of any kind of learning which he chooses to profess; since a fine imagination, a lively wit, an easy and copious style, cannot possibly obstruct the acquisition of any science whatever; but must necessarily assist him in his studies, and shorten his labour."

Sir William Jones's Works, vol. ii. *p.* 317.

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* See his letters, which, as a display of the effects of poetical idleness, are highly instructive.

be aware of the importance of self-command, and of exertion, because their indolence is peculiarly exposed, not merely to unhappiness, but to diseases of mind, and to errors of conduct, which are generally fatal. This interesting subject deserves a particular investigation; but we must content ourselves with one or two cursory remarks. Relief is sometimes sought from the melancholy of indolence in practices, which for a time sooth and gratify the sensations, but which in the end involve the sufferer in darker gloom. To command the external circumstances by which happiness is affected, is not in human power; but there are various substances in nature which operate on the system of the nerves, so as to give a fictitious gaiety to the ideas of imagination, and to alter the effect of the external impressions which we receive. Opium is chiefly employed for this purpose by the disciples of Mahomet and the inhabitants of Asia; but alkohol, the principle of intoxication in vinous and spirituous liquors, is preferred in Europe, and is universally used in the Christian world*. Under the various wounds to which indolent sensibility is exposed, and under the gloomy apprehensions respecting futurity to which it is so often a prey, how strong is the temptation to have recourse to an antidote by which the pain of these wounds is suspended, by which the heart is exhilarated, visions of happiness are excited in the mind, and the forms of external nature clothed with new beauty!

Elysium opens round,
A pleasing phrenzy buoys the lighten'd soul,
And sanguine hopes dispel your fleeting care;
And what was difficult, and what was dire,
Yields to your prowess and superior stars:
The happiest you of all that e'er were mad,
Or are, or shall be, could this folly last.
But soon your heaven is gone; a heavier gloom
Shuts o'er your head——
* * *
——— Morning comes; your cares return
With tenfold rage. An anxious stomach well
May be endured; so may the throbbing head:
But such a dim delirium, such a dream
Involves you; such a dastardly despair
Unmans your soul, as madd'ning Pentheus felt,
When, baited round Cithæron's cruel sides,
He saw two suns and double Thebes ascend.
Armstrong's Art of Preserving Health, b. iv. l. 163.

Such are the pleasures and the pains of intoxication as they occur in the temperament of sensibility, described by a genuine poet, with a degree of truth and energy, which nothing but experience could have dictated. There are indeed some individuals of this temperament on whom wine produces no cheering influence. On some, even in very moderate quantities, its effects are painfully irritating; in large draughts it excites dark and melancholy ideas; and in draughts still larger, the fierceness of insanity itself. Such men are happily exempted from a temptation, to which experience teaches us the finest dispositions often yield, and the influence of which, when strengthened by habit, it is a humiliating truth that the most powerful minds have not been able to resist.

It is the more necessary for men of genius to be on their guard against the habitual use of wine, because it is apt to steal on them insensibly; and because the temptation to excess usually presents itself to them in their social hours, when they are alive only to warm and generous emotions, and when prudence and moderation are often contemned as selfishness and timidity.

It is the more necessary for them to guard against excess in the use of wine, because on them its effects are, physically and morally, in an especial manner injurious. In proportion to its stimulating influence on the system (on which the pleasurable sensations depend) is the debility that ensues; a debility that destroys digestion, and terminates in habitual fever, dropsy, jaundice, paralysis, or insanity. As the strength of the body decays, the volition fails; in proportion as the sensations are soothed and gratified, the sensibility increases; and morbid sensibility is the parent of indolence, because, while it impairs the regulating power of the mind, it exaggerates all the obstacles to exertion. Activity, perseverance, and self-command, become more and more difficult, and the great purposes of utility, patriotism, or of honourable ambition, which had occupied the imagination, die away in fruitless resolutions, or in feeble efforts.

To apply these observations to the subject of our memoirs would be an useless as well as a painful task. It is indeed a duty we owe to the living, not to allow our admiration of great genius, or even our pity for its unhappy destiny, to conceal or

* There are a great number of other substances, which may be considered under this point of view —tobacco, tea, and coffee, are of the number. These substances essentially differ from each other in their qualities, and an inquiry into the particular effects of each on the health, morals, and happiness of those who use them, would be curious and useful. The effects of wine and of opium on the temperament of sensibility, the editor intended to have discussed in this place, at some length; but he found the subject too extensive and too professional to be introduced with propriety. The difficulty of abandoning any of these narcotics (if we may so term them) when inclination is strengthened by habit, is well known. Johnson, in his distresses, had experienced the cheering but treacherous influence of wine, and by a powerful effort abandoned it. He was obliged, however, to use tea as a substitute, and this was the solace to which he constantly had recourse under his habitual melancholy. The praises of wine form many of the most beautiful lyrics of the poets of Greece and Rome, and of modern Europe. Whether opium, which produces visions still more ecstatic, has been the theme of the eastern poets, I do not know. Wine is drunk in small quantities at a time, in company, where, *for a time*, it promotes harmony and social affection. Opium is swallowed by the Asiatics in full doses at once, and the inebriate retires to the solitary indulgence of his delirious imaginations. Hence the wine-drinker appears in a superior light to the imbiber of opium, a distinction which he owes more to the *form* than to the *quality* of his liquor.

disguise its errors. But there are sentiments of respect, and even of tenderness, with which this duty should be performed; there is an awful sanctity which invests the mansions of the dead; and let those who moralize over the graves of their contemporaries, reflect with humility on their own errors, nor forget how soon they may themselves require the candour and the sympathy they are called upon to bestow.

Soon after the death of Burns, the following article appeared in the Dumfries Journal, from which it was copied into the Edinburgh newspapers, and into various other periodical publications. It is from the elegant pen of a lady already alluded to in the course of these memoirs*, whose exertions for the family of our bard, in the circles of literature and fashion in which she moves, have done her so much honour.

"THE attention of the public seems to be much occupied at present with the loss it has recently sustained in the death of the Caledonian poet Robert Burns; a loss calculated to be severely felt throughout the literary world, as well as lamented in the narrower sphere of private friendship. It was not therefore probable that such an event should be long unattended with the accustomed profusion of posthumous anecdotes and memoirs which are usually circulated immediately after the death of every rare and celebrated personage: I had however conceived no intention of appropriating to myself the privilege of criticising Burns' writings and character, or of anticipating on the province of a biographer.

"Conscious indeed of my own inability to do justice to such a subject, I should have continued wholly silent, had misrepresentation and calumny been less industrious; but a regard to truth, no less than affection for the memory of a friend, must now justify my offering to the public a few at least of those observations which an intimate acquaintance with Burns, and the frequent opportunities I have had of observing equally his happy qualities and his failings for several years past, have enabled me to communicate.

"It will actually be an injustice done to Burns' character, not only by future generations and foreign countries, but even by his native Scotland, and perhaps a number of his cotemporaries, that he is generally talked of, and considered, with reference to his poetical talents *only*: for the fact is, even allowing his great and original genius its due tribute of admiration, that poetry (I appeal to all who have had the advantage of being personally acquainted with him) was actually not his *forte*. Many others perhaps may have ascended to prouder heights in the region of Parnassus, but none certainly ever outshone Burns in the charms—the sorcery, I would almost call it, of fascinating conversation, the spontaneous eloquence of social argument, or the unstudied poignancy of brilliant repartee; nor was any man, I believe, ever gifted with a larger portion of the "*vivida vis animi*." His personal endowments were perfectly correspondent to the qualifications of his mind: his form was manly; his action, energy itself; devoid in great measure perhaps of those graces, of that polish, acquired only in the refinement of societies where in early life he could have no opportunities of mixing; but where, such was the irresistible power of attraction that encircled him, though his appearance and manners were always peculiar, he never failed to delight, and to excel. His figure seemed to bear testimony to his earlier destination and employments. It seemed rather moulded by nature for the rough exercises of agriculture, than the gentler cultivation of the belles lettres. His features were stamped with the hardy character of independence, and the firmness of conscious, though not arrogant, pre-eminence; the animated expressions of countenance were almost peculiar to himself; the rapid lightnings of his eye were always the harbingers of some flash of genius, whether they darted the fiery glances of insulted and indignant superiority, or beamed with the impassioned sentiment of fervent and impetuous affections. His voice alone could improve upon the magic of his eye; sonorous, replete with the finest modulations, it alternately captivated the ear with the melody of poetic numbers, the perspicuity of nervous reasoning, or the ardent sallies of enthusiastic patriotism. The keenness of satire was, I am almost at a loss whether to say his forte or his foible; for though nature had endowed him with a portion of the most pointed excellence in that dangerous talent, he suffered it too often to be the vehicle of personal, and sometimes unfounded animosities. It was not always that sportiveness of humour, that "unwary pleasantry," which *Sterne* has depictured with touches so conciliatory, but the darts of ridicule were frequently directed as the caprice of the instant suggested, or as the altercations of parties and of persons happened to kindle the restlessness of his spirit into interest or aversion. This, however, was not invariably the case; his wit (which is no unusual matter indeed) had always the start of his judgment, and would lead him to the indulgence of raillery uniformly acute, but often unaccompanied with the least desire to wound. The suppression of an arch and full-pointed bon-mot from a dread of offending its object, the sage of Zurie very properly classes as a virtue *only to be sought for in the Calendar of Saints*; if so, Burns must not be too severely dealt with, for being rather deficient in it. He paid for this mischievous wit as dearly as any one could do. "'Twas no extravagant arithmetic" to say of him, as was said of Yorick, "that for every ten jokes he got an hundred enemies;" but much allowance will be made by a candid mind for the splenetic warmth of a spirit whom "distress had spited with the world," and which, unbounded in its intellectual sallies and pursuits, continually experienced the curbs imposed by the waywardness of his fortune. The vivacity of his wishes and temper was indeed checked by almost habitual disappointments, which sat heavy on a heart, that acknowledged the ruling passion of independence,

* *See p. 48.*

without having ever been placed beyond the grasp of penury. His soul was never languid or inactive, and his genius was extinguished only with the last sparks of retreating life. His passions rendered him, according as they disclosed themselves in affection or antipathy, an object of enthusiastic attachment, or of decided enmity; for *he* possessed none of that negative insipidity of character, whose love might be regarded with indifference, or whose resentment could be considered with contempt. In this, it should seem, the temper of his associates took the tincture from his own; for *he* acknowledged in the universe but two classes of objects, those of adoration the most fervent, or of aversion the most uncontroulable; and it has been frequently a reproach to him, that, unsusceptible of indifference, often hating, where he ought only to have despised, he alternately opened his heart and poured forth the treasures of his understanding to such as were incapable of appreciating the homage; and elevated to the privileges of an adversary, some who were unqualified in all respects for the honour of a contest so distinguished.

"It is said that the celebrated Dr. Johnson professed to love "a good hater," a temperament that would have singularly adapted him to cherish a prepossession in favour of our bard, who perhaps fell but little short even of the surly doctor in this qualification, as long as the disposition to ill-will continued; but the warmth of his passions was fortunately corrected by their versatility. He was seldom, indeed never implacable in his resentments, and sometimes it has been alleged, not inviolably faithful in his engagements of friendship. Much indeed has been said about his inconstancy and caprice, but I am inclined to believe, that they originated less in a levity of sentiment, than from an extreme impetuosity of feeling, which rendered him prompt to take umbrage; and his sensations of pique, where he fancied he had discovered the traces of neglect, scorn, or unkindness, took their measure of asperity from the overflowings of the opposite sentiments which preceded them, and which seldom failed to regain its ascendency in his bosom on the return of calmer reflexion. He was candid and manly in the avowal of his errors, and *his avowal* was a *reparation*. His native *fierté* never forsaking him for a moment, the value of a frank acknowledgment was enhanced tenfold towards a generous mind, from its never being attended with servility. His mind, organized only for the stronger and more acute operations of the passions, was impracticable to the efforts of superciliousness that would have depressed it into humility, and equally superior to the encroachments of venal suggestions that might have led him into the mazes of hypocrisy.

"It has been observed, that he was far from averse to the incense of flattery, and could receive it tempered with less delicacy than might have been expected, as he seldom transgressed extravagantly in that way himself: where he paid a compliment it might indeed claim the power of intoxication, as approbation from him was always an honest tribute from the warmth and sincerity of his heart. It has been sometimes represented, by those who it should seem had a view to depreciate, though they could not hope wholly to obscure that native brilliancy, which the powers of this extraordinary man had invariably bestowed on every thing that came from his lips or pen, that the history of the Ayrshire ploughboy was an ingenious fiction, fabricated for the purposes of obtaining the interests of the great, and enhancing the merits of what in reality required no foil. The Cotter's Saturday Night, Tam O'Shanter, and the Mountain Daisy, besides a number of later productions, where the maturity of his genius will be readily traced, and which will be given to the public as soon as his friends have collected and arranged them, speak sufficiently for themselves; and had they fallen from a hand more dignified in the ranks of society than that of a peasant, they had perhaps bestowed as unusual a grace there, as even on the humbler shade of rustic inspiration, from whence they really sprung.

"To the obscure scene of Burns' education, and to the laborious though honourable station of rural industry, in which his parentage enrolled him, almost every inhabitant of the south of Scotland can give testimony. His only surviving brother, Gilbert Burns, now guides the ploughshare of his forefathers in Ayrshire, at a farm near Mauchline*; and our poet's eldest son (a lad of nine years of age, whose early dispositions already prove him to be in some measure the inheritor of his father's talents, as well as indigence) has been destined by his family to the humble employments of the loom†.

"That Burns had received no classical education, and was acquainted with the Greek and Roman authors only through the medium of translations, is a fact of which all who were in the habits of conversing with him might readily be convinced. I have indeed seldom observed him to be at a loss in conversation, unless where the dead languages and their writers have been the subjects of discussion. When I have pressed him to tell me, why he never applied himself to acquire the Latin, in particular, a language which his happy memory would have so soon enabled him to be master of, he used only to reply, with a smile, that he had already learnt all the Latin he desired to know, and that was "*Omnia vincit amor*," a sentence, that, from his writings and most favourite pursuits, it should undoubtedly seem that he was most thoroughly versed in; but I really believe his classic erudition extended little, if any farther.

"The penchant Burns had uniformly acknowledged for the festive pleasures of the table, and towards the fairer and softer objects of nature's creation, has been the rallying point from whence the attacks of his censors have been unformly directed, and to these it must be confessed he shewed himself no stoic. His poetical pieces blend with alternate happiness of description, the frolic spirit of the flowing bowl, or melt the heart to the tender and impassioned sentiments in which beauty

* This very respectable and very superior man is now removed to Dumfriesshire. He rents lands on the estate of Closeburn, and is a tenant of the venerable Dr. Monteith. E.

† This destination is now altered. E.

always taught him to pour forth his own. But who would wish to reprove the feelings he has consecrated with such lively touches of nature? and where is the rugged moralist that will persuade us so far to "chill the genial current of the soul," as to regret that Ovid ever celebrated his Corinna, or that Anacreon sung beneath his vine?.

"I will not however undertake to be the apologist of the irregularities even of a man of genius, though I believe it is as certain that genius never was free from irregularities, as that their absolution may in great measure be justly claimed, since it is perfectly evident that the world had continued very stationary in its intellectual acquirements, had it never given birth to any but men of plain sense. Evenness of conduct, and a due regard to the decorums of the world, have been so rarely seen to move hand in hand with genius, that some have gone as far as to say, though there I cannot wholly acquiesce, that they are even incompatible; besides, the frailties that cast their shade over the splendour of superior merit, are more conspicuously glaring than where they are the attendants of mere mediocrity. It is only on the gem we are disturbed to see the dust; the pebble may be soiled, and we never regard it. The eccentric intuitions of genius too often yield the soul to the wild effervescence of desires, always unbounded, and sometimes equally dangerous to the repose of others as fatal to its own. No wonder then if virtue herself be sometimes lost in the blaze of kindling animation, or that the calm monitions of reason are not invariably found sufficient to fetter an imagination, which scorns the narrow limits and restrictions that would chain it to the level of ordinary minds. The child of nature, the child of sensibility, unschooled in the rigid precepts of philosophy, too often unable to controul the passions which proved a source of frequent errors and misfortunes to him, Burns made his own artless apology in language more impressive than all the argumentatory vindications in the world could do, in one of his own poems, where he delineates the gradual expansion of his mind to the lessons of the "tutelary muse," who concludes an address to her pupil, almost unique for simplicity and beautiful poetry, with these lines:

"I saw thy pulse's madd'ning play
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way;
Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray,
Was *light from heaven* !*"

"I have already transgressed beyond the bounds I had proposed to myself, on first committing this sketch to paper, which comprehends what at least I have been led to deem the leading features of Burns' mind and character: a literary critique I do not aim at; mine is wholly fulfilled, if in these pages I have been able to delineate any of those strong traits that distinguished him, of those talents which raised him from the plough, where he passed the bleak morning of his life, weaving his rude wreaths of poesy with the wild field flowers that sprung around his cottage, to that enviable eminence of literary fame, where Scotland will long cherish his memory with delight and gratitude; and proudly remember, that beneath her cold sky, a genius was ripened, without care or culture, that would have done honour to climes more favourable to those luxuriances—that warmth of colouring and fancy, in which he so eminently excelled.

"From several paragraphs I have noticed in the public prints, ever since the idea of sending this sketch to some one of them was formed, I find private animosities have not yet subsided, and that envy has not yet exhausted all her shafts. I still trust, however, that honest fame will be permanently affixed to Burns' character, which I think it will be found he *has* merited by the candid and impartial among his countrymen. And where a recollection of the imprudencies that sullied his brighter qualifications interposes, let the imperfection of all human excellence be remembered at the same time; leaving those inconsistencies, which alternately exalted his nature into the seraph, and sunk it again into the man, to the tribunal which *alone* can investigate the labyrinths of the human heart—

"Where they alike in trembling hope *repose*,—
"The bosom of his father and his *God*."
Gray's Elegy.

"*Annandale, August* 7, 1796."

AFTER this account of the life and personal character of Burns, it may be expected that some inquiry should be made into his literary merits. It will not however be necessary to enter very minutely into this investigation. If fiction be, as some suppose, the soul of poetry, no one had ever less pretensions to the name of poet than Burns. Though he has displayed great powers of imagination, yet the subjects on which he has written, are seldom, if ever, imaginary; his poems, as well as his letters, may be considered as the effusions of his sensibility, and the transcript of his own musings on the real incidents of his humble life. If we add, that they also contain most happy delineations of the characters, manners, and scenery that presented themselves to his observation, we shall include almost all the subjects of his muse. His writings may therefore be regarded as affording a great part of the data on which our account of his personal character has been founded; and most of the observations we have applied to the man, are applicable, with little variation, to the poet.

The impression of his birth, and of his original station in life, was not more evident on his form and manners, than on his poetical productions. The incidents which form the subjects of his poems, though some of them highly interesting and susceptible of poetical imagery, are incidents in the life of a peasant who takes no pains to disguise the lowliness of his condition, or to throw into shade

* Vide the Vision—Duan 2d.

the circumstances attending it, which more feeble or more artificial minds would have endeavoured to conceal. The same rudeness and inattention appears in the formation of his rhymes, which are frequently incorrect, while the measure in which many of the poems are written has little of the pomp or harmony of modern versification, and is indeed, to an English ear, strange and uncouth. The greater part of his earlier poems are written in the dialect of his country, which is obscure, if not unintelligible, to Englishmen, and which, though it still adheres more or less to the speech of almost every Scotchman, all the polite and the ambitious are now endeavouring to banish from their tongues as well as their writings. The use of it in composition, naturally therefore calls up ideas of vulgarity in the mind, These singularities are increased by the character of the poet, who delights to express himself with a simplicity that approaches to nakedness, and with an unmeasured energy that often alarms delicacy, and sometimes offends taste. Hence, in approaching him, the first impression is perhaps repulsive: there is an air of coarseness about him, which is diffieultly reconciled with our established notions of poetical excellence.

As the reader however becomes better acquainted with the poet, the effects of his peculiarities lessen. He perceives in his poems, even on the lowest subjects, expressions of sentiment, and delineations of manners, which are highly interesting. The scenery he describes, is evidently taken from real life; the characters he introduces, and the incidents he relates, have the impression of nature and truth. His humour, though wild and unbridled, is irresistibly amusing, and is sometimes heightened in its effects by the introduction of emotions of tenderness, with which genuine humour so happily unites. Nor is this the extent of his power. The reader, if he examines farther, discovers that the poet is not confined to the descriptive, the humorous, or the pathetic; he is found, as occasion offers, to rise with ease into the terrible and the sublime. Every where he appears devoid of artifice, performing what he attempts, with little apparent effort, and impressing on the offspring of *his fancy, the stamp of his understanding*. The reader, capable of forming a just estimate of poetical talents, discovers in these circumstances marks of uncommon genius, and is willing to investigate more minutely its nature, and its claims to originality. This last point we shall examine first.

That Burns had not the advantages of a classical education, or of any degree of acquaintance with the Greek or Roman writers in their original dress, has appeared in the history of his life. He acquired indeed some knowledge of the French language, but it does not appear that he was ever much conversant in French literature, nor is there any evidence of his having derived any of his poetical stores from that source. With the English classics he became well acquainted in the course of his life, and the effects of this acquaintance are observable in his latter productions; but the character and style of his poetry were formed very early, and the model which he followed, in as far as he can be said to have had one, is to be sought for in the works of the poets who have written in the Scottish dialect—in the works of such of them more especially, as are familiar to the peasantry of Scotland. Some observations on these, may form a proper introduction to a more particular examination of the poetry of Burns. The studies of the editor in this direction are indeed very recent and very imperfect. It would have been imprudent for him to have entered on this subject at all, but for the kindness of Mr. Ramsay, of Ochtertyre, whose assistance he is proud to acknowledge, and to whom the reader must ascribe whatever is of any value in the following imperfect sketch of literary compositions in the Scottish idiom.

It is a circumstance not a little curious, and which does not seem to be satisfactorily explained, that, in the thirteenth century, the language of the two British nations, if at all different, differed only in dialect, the Gaelic in the one, like the Welsh and Armoric in the other, being confined to the mountainous districts*. The English under the Edwards, and the Scots under Wallace and Bruce, spoke the same language. We may observe also, that in Scotland the history of poetry ascends to a period nearly as remote as in England. Barbour, and blind Harry, James the First, Dunbar, Douglas, and Lindsay, who lived in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, were coeval with the fathers of poetry in England; and, in the opinion of Mr. Warton, not inferior to them in genius or in composition. Though the language of the two countries gradually deviated from each other during this period, yet the difference on the whole was not considerable; not perhaps greater than between the different dialects of the different parts of England in our own time.

At the death of James the Fifth, in 1542, the language of Scotland was in a flourishing condition, wanting only writers in prose equal to those in verse. Two circumstances, propitious on the whole, operated to prevent this. The first was the passion of the Scots for composition in Latin; and the second, the accession of James the Sixth to the English throne. It may easily be imagined, that if Buchanan had devoted his admirable talents, even in part, to the cultivation of his native tongue, as was done by the revivers of letters in Italy, he would have left compositions in that language, which might have incited other men of genius to have followed his example†, and given duration to the language itself. The union of the two crowns, in the person of James, overthrew all reasonable expectation of this kind. That monarch, seated on the English throne, would no longer suffer himself to be addressed in the rude dialect in which the Scottish clergy had so often insulted his dignity. He encouraged Latin or English only, both of which he prided himself on writing with purity, though he himself never could acquire the English pronunciation, but spoke with a Scottish idiom and intonation to the last.—Scotsmen of ta-

* *Historical Essay on Scottish Song*, *p.* xx. by Mr. Ritson.

† *e. g.* The authors of the *Deliciæ Poetarum Scotorum*, *&c.*

lents declined writing in their native language, which they knew was not acceptable to their learned and pedantic monarch, and at a time when national prejudice and enmity prevailed to a great degree, they disdained to study the niceties of the English tongue, though of so much easier acquisition than a dead language. Lord Sterling, and Drummond of Hawthornden, the only Scotsmen who wrote poetry in those times, were exceptions. They studied the language of England, and composed in it with precision and elegance. They were, however, the last of their countrymen who deserved to be considered as poets in that century. The muses of Scotland sunk into silence, and did not again raise their voices for a period of eighty years.

To what causes are we to attribute this extreme depression, among a people comparatively learned, enterprising, and ingenious? Shall we impute it to the fanaticism of the covenanters, or to the tyranny of the house of Stewart after their restoration to the throne? Doubtless these causes operated, but they seem unequal to account for the effect. In England, similar distractions and oppression took place, yet poetry flourished there in a remarkable degree. During this period, Cowley, and Waller, and Dryden sung, and Milton raised his strain of unparalleled grandeur. To the causes already mentioned, another must be added, in accounting for the torpor of Scottish literature—the want of a proper vehicle for men of genius to employ. The civil wars had frightened away the Latin muses, and no standard had been established of the Scottish tongue, which was deviating still farther from the pure English idiom.

The revival of literature in Scotland, may be dated from the establishment of the union, or rather from the extinction of the rebellion in 1715. The nations being finally incorporated, it was clearly seen that their tongues must in the end incorporate also; or rather indeed that the Scottish language must degenerate into a provincial idiom, to be avoided by those who would aim at distinction in letters, or rise to eminence in the united legislature.

Soon after this, a band of men of genius appeared, who studied the English classics, and imitated their beauties in the same manner as they studied the classics of Greece and Rome. They had admirable models of composition lately presented to them by the writers of the reign of Queen Anne; particularly in the periodical papers published by Steele, Addison, and their associated friends, which circulated widely through Scotland, and diffused every where a taste for purity of style and sentiment, and for critical disquisition. At length the Scottish writers succeeded in English composition, and an union was formed of the literary talents, as well as of the legislatures of the two nations. On this occasion the poets took the lead. While Henry Home*, Dr. Wallace, and their learned associates, were only laying in their intellectual stores, and studying to clear themselves of their Scottish idioms, Thomson, Mallet, and Hamilton of Bangour, had made their appearance before the public, and been enrolled on the list of English poets. The writers in prose followed—a numerous and powerful band, and poured their ample stores into the general stream of British literature. Scotland possessed her four universities before the accession of James to the English throne. Immediately before the union, she acquired her parochial schools. These establishments combining happily together, made the elements of knowledge of easy acquisition, and presented a direct path, by which the ardent student might be carried along into the recesses of science or learning. As civil broils ceased, and faction and prejudice gradually died away, a wider field was opened to literary ambition, and the influence of the Scottish institutions for instruction, on the productions of the press, became more and more apparent.

It seems indeed probable that the establishment of the parochial schools produced effects on the rural muse of Scotland also, which have not hitherto been suspected, and which, though less splendid in their nature, are not however to be regarded as trivial, whether we consider the happiness or the morals of the people.

There is some reason to believe that the original inhabitants of the British isles possessed a peculiar and an interesting species of music, which being banished from the plains by the successive invasions of the Saxons, Danes, and Normans, was preserved with the native race, in the wilds of Ireland, and in the mountains of Scotland and Wales. The Irish, the Scottish, and the Welch music differ indeed from each other, but the difference may be considered as in dialect only, and probably produced by the influence of time, like the different dialects of their common language. If this conjecture be true, the Scottish music must be more immediately of a Highland origin, and the Lowland tunes, though now of a character somewhat distinct, must have descended from the mountains in remote ages. Whatever credit may be given to conjectures evidently involved in great uncertainty, there can be no doubt that the Scottish peasantry have been long in possession of a number of songs and ballads composed in their native dialect, and sung to their native music. The subjects of these compositions were such as most interested the simple inhabitants, and, in the succession of time, varied probably as the condition of society varied. During the separation and the hostility of the two nations, these songs and ballads, as far as our imperfect documents enable us to judge, were chiefly warlike; such as the *Huntis of Cheviot*, and the *Battle of Harlaw*. After the union of the two crowns, when a certain degree of peace and of tranquillity took place, the rural muse of Scotland breathed in softer accents. "In the want of real evidence respecting the history of our songs," says Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, "recourse may be had to conjecture. One would be disposed to think that the most beautiful of the Scottish tunes were clothed with new words after the union of the crowns. The inhabitants of the borders, who had formerly been warriors from choice, and husbandmen from necessity, either quitted the country, or were transformed into

* Lord Kaims.

real shepherds, easy in their circumstances, and satisfied with their lot. Some sparks of that spirit of chivalry for which they are celebrated by Froissart, remained, sufficient to inspire elevation of sentiment and gallantry towards the fair sex. The familiarity and kindness which had long subsisted between the gentry and the peasantry, could not all at once be obliterated, and this connexion tended to sweeten rural life. In this state of innocence, ease, and tranquillity of mind, the love of poetry and music would still maintain its ground, though it would naturally assume a form congenial to the more peaceful state of society. The minstrels whose metrical tales used once to rouse the borderers like the trumpet's sound, had been, by an order of the legislature (in 1579), classed with rogues and vagabonds, and attempted to be suppressed. Knox and his disciples influenced the Scottish parliament, but contended in vain with her rural muse. Amidst our Arcadian vales, probably on the banks of the Tweed, or some of its tributary streams, one or more original geniuses may have arisen, who were destined to give a new turn to the taste of their countrymen. They would see that the events and pursuits which chequer private life, were the proper subjects for popular poetry. Love, which had formerly held a divided sway with glory and ambition, became now the master passion of the soul. To pourtray in lively and delicate colours, though with a hasty hand, the hopes and fears that agitate the breast of the love-sick swain, or forlorn maiden, affords ample scope to the rural poet. Love-songs, of which Tibullus himself would not have been ashamed, might be composed by an uneducated rustic with a slight tincture of letters; or if in these songs the character of the rustic be sometimes assumed, the truth of character and the language of nature are preserved. With unaffected simplicity and tenderness, topics are urged, most likely to soften the heart of a cruel and coy mistress, or to regain a fickle lover. Even in such as are of a melancholy cast, a ray of hope breaks through, and dispels the deep and settled gloom which characterizes the sweetest of the Highland *luenigs*, or vocal airs. Nor are these songs all plaintive; many of them are lively and humorous, and some appear, to us, coarse and indelicate. They seem, however, genuine descriptions of the manners of an energetic and sequestered people in their hours of mirth and festivity, though in their portraits some objects are brought into open view, which more fastidious painters would have thrown into shade.

"As those rural poets sung for amusement, not for gain, their effusions seldom exceeded a love-song, or a ballad of satire or humour, which, like the works of the elder minstrels, were seldom committed to writing, but treasured up in the memory of their friends and neighbours. Neither known to the learned nor patronized by the great, these rustic bards lived and died in obscurity; and, by a strange fatality, their story, and even their very names, have been forgotten*. When proper models for pastoral songs were produced, there would be no want of imitators. To succeed in this species of composition, soundness of understanding and sensibility of heart were more requisite, than flights of imagination, or pomp of numbers. Great changes have certainly taken place in Scottish song-writing, though we cannot trace the steps of this change, and few of the pieces admired in Queen Mary's time, are now to be discovered in modern collections. It is possible, though not probable, that the music may have remained nearly the same, though the words to the tunes were entirely new-modelled*."

These conjectures are highly ingenious. It cannot however be presumed that the state of ease and tranquillity described by Mr. Ramsay, took place among the Scottish peasantry immediately on the union of the crowns, or indeed during the greater part of the seventeenth century. The Scottish nation, through all its ranks, was deeply agitated by the civil wars, and the religious persecutions which succeeded each other in that disastrous period; it was not till after the revolution in 1688, and the subsequent establishment of their beloved form of church government, that the peasantry of the Lowlands enjoyed comparative repose; and it is since that period that a great number of the most admired Scottish songs have been produced, though the tunes to which they are sung are, in general, of much greater antiquity. It is not unreasonable to suppose, that the peace and security derived from the revolution and the union, produced a favourable change on the rustic poetry of Scotland, and it can scarcely be doubted, that the institution of parish schools in 1696, by which a certain degree of instruction was diffused universally among the peasantry, contributed to this happy effect.

Soon after this, appeared Allan Ramsay, the Scottish Theocritus. He was born on the high mountains that divide Clydesdale and Annandale, in a small hamlet by the banks of Glengonar, a stream which descends into the Clyde. The ruins of this hamlet are still shewn to the inquiring traveller†. He was the son of a peasant, and probably received such instruction as his parish school bestowed, and the poverty of his parents admitted‡. Ramsay made his appearance in Edinburgh

* In the Pepys collection, there are a few Scottish songs of the last century, but the names of the authors are not preserved.

* *Extract of a letter from Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre to the editor, Sept.* 11, 1799. In the *Bee, vol.* II, *p.* 201, is a communication of Mr. Ramsay, under the signature of J. Runcole, which enters into this subject somewhat more at large. In that paper, he gives his reasons for questioning the antiquity of many of the most celebrated Scottish songs.

† See *Campbell's History of Poetry in Scotland, p.* 185.

‡ The father of Ramsay was, it is said, a workman in the lead-mines of the Earl of Hopeton, at Lead-hills. The workmen in those mines at present, are of a very superior character to miners in general. They have only six hours of labour in the day, and have time for reading. They have a common library, supported by contribution, containing several thousand volumes. When this was

in the beginning of the present century, in the humble character of an apprentice to a barber, or peruke-maker; he was then fourteen or fifteen years of age. By degrees he acquired notice for his social disposition, and his talent for the composition of verses in the Scottish idiom; and, changing his profession for that of a bookseller, he became intimate with many of the literary, as well as of the gay and fashionable characters of his time*. Having published a volume of poems of his own in 1721, which was favourably received, he undertook to make a collection of ancient Scottish poems, under the title of the *Ever-green*, and was afterwards encouraged to present to the world a collection of Scottish songs. "From what sources he procured them," says Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre, "whether from tradition or manuscript, is uncertain. As in the *Ever-green* he made some rash attempts to improve on the originals of his ancient poems, he probably used still greater freedom with the songs and ballads. The truth cannot however be known on this point, till manuscripts of the songs printed by him, more ancient than the present century, shall be produced, or access be obtained to his own papers, if they are still in existence. To several tunes, which either wanted words, or had words that were improper or imperfect, he or his friends adapted verses worthy of the melodies they accompanied, worthy indeed of the golden age. These verses were perfectly intelligible to every rustic, yet justly admired by persons of taste, who regarded them as the genuine offspring of the pastoral muse. In some respects Ramsay had advantages not possessed by poets writing in the Scottish dialect in our days. Songs in the dialect of Cumberland or Lancashire could never be popular, because these dialects have never been spoken by persons of fashion. But till the middle of the present century, every Scotsman, from the peer to the peasant, spoke a truly Doric language. It is true the English moralists and poets were by this time read by every person of condition, and considered as the standards for polite composition. But as national prejudices were still strong, the busy, the learned, the gay, and the fair, continued to speak their native dialect, and that with an elegance and poignancy, of which Scotsmen of the present day can have no just notion. I am old enough to have conversed with Mr. Spittal of Leuchat, a scholar and a man of fashion, who survived all the members of the union parliament, in which he had a seat. His pronunciation and phraseology differed as much from the common dialect as the language of St. James's from that of Thames-street. Had we retained a court and parliament of our own, the tongues of the two sister kingdoms would indeed have differed like the Castilian and Portuguese; but each would have had its own classics, not in a single branch, but in the whole circle of literature.

"Ramsay associated with the men of wit and fashion of his day, and several of them attempted to write poetry in his manner. Persons too idle or too dissipated to think of compositions that required much exertion, succeeded very happily in making tender sonnets to favourite tunes in compliment to their mistresses, and, transforming themselves into impassioned shepherds, caught the language of the characters they assumed. Thus, about the year 1731, Robert Crawfurd of Auchinames, wrote the modern song of *Tweed Side**, which has been so much admired. In 1743, sir Gilbert Elliot, the first of our lawyers who both spoke and wrote English elegantly, composed, in the character of a love-sick swain, a beautiful song, beginning, *My sheep I neglected, I lost my sheep-hook*, on the marriage of his mistress, Miss Forbes, with Ronald Crawfurd. And, about twelve years afterwards, the sister of sir Gilbert wrote the *ancient* words to the tune of the *Flowers of the Forest*†, and supposed to allude to the battle of Flowden. In spite of the double rhyme, it is a sweet, and, though in some parts allegorical, a natural expression of national sorrow. The more *modern* words, to the same tune, beginning, *I have seen the smiling of fortune beguiling*, were written long before by Mrs. Cockburn, a woman of great wit, who outlived all the first group of *literati* of the present century, all of whom were very fond of her. I was delighted with her company, though, when I saw her, she was very old. Much did she know that is now lost."

In addition to these instances of Scottish songs, produced in the earlier part of the present century, may be mentioned the ballad of *Hardiknute*, by lady Wardlaw, the ballad of *William and Margaret*, and the song entitled the *Birks of Endermay*, by Mallet; the love-song, beginning, *For ever fortune wilt thou prove*, produced by the youthful muse of Thomson; and the exquisite pathetic ballad, *The Braes of Yarrow*, by Hamilton of Bangour. On the revival of letters in Scotland, subsequent to the Union, a very general taste seems to have prevailed for the national songs and music. "For many years," says Mr. Ramsay, "the singing of songs was the great delight of the higher and middle order of the people, as well as of the peasantry; and, though a taste for Italian music has interfered with this amusement, it is still very prevalent. Between forty and fifty years ago, the common people were not only exceedingly fond of songs and ballads, but of metrical history. Often have I, in my cheerful morn of youth, listened to them with delight, when reading or reciting the exploits of Wallace and Bruce against the *Southrons*. Lord Hailes was wont to call Blind Harry their *bible*, he being their great favourite next the scriptures. When, therefore, one in the vale of life felt the first

instituted I have not learnt. These miners are said to be of a very sober and moral character. Allan Ramsay, when very young, is supposed to have been a washer of ore in these mines.

* "He was coeval with a Joseph Mitchell, and his club of *small* wits, who, about 1719, published a very poor miscellany, to which Dr. Young, the author of the *Night Thoughts*, prefixed a copy of verses." *Extract of a letter from Mr. Ramsay of Ochtertyre to the editor.*

* Beginning, *What beauties does Flora disclose.*

† Beginning, *I have heard a lilting at our ewes-milking.*

emotions of genius, he wanted not models *sui generis*. But, though the seeds of poetry were scattered with a plentiful hand among the Scottish peasantry, the product was probably like that of pears and apples—of a thousand that spring up, nine hundred and fifty are so bad as to set the teeth on edge; forty-five or more are passable and useful; and the rest of an exquisite flavour. Allan Ramsay and Burns are *wildlings* of this last description. They had the example of the elder Scottish poets; they were not without the aid of the best English writers; and, what was of still more importance, they were no strangers to the book of nature, and to the book of God."

From this general view, it is apparent, that Allan Ramsay may be considered as in a great measure the reviver of the rural poetry of his country. His collection of ancient Scottish poems, under the name of the *Ever-green*, his collection of Scottish songs, and his own poems, the principal of which is the *Gentle Shepherd*, have been universally read among the peasantry of his country, and have, in some degree, superseded the adventures of Bruce and Wallace, as recorded by Barbour and Blind Harry. Burns was well acquainted with all of these. He had also before him the poems of Fergusson, in the Scottish dialect, which have been produced in our own times, and of which it will be necessary to give a short account.

Fergusson was born of parents who had it in their power to procure him a liberal education, a circumstance, however, which, in Scotland, implies no very high rank in society. From a well written and apparently authentic account of his life*, we learn that he spent six years at the schools of Edinburgh and Dundee, and several years at the universities of Edinburgh and St. Andrew's. It appears that he was at one time destined for the Scottish church; but, as he advanced towards manhood, he renounced that intention, and, at Edinburgh, entered the office of a writer to the signet, a title which designates a separate and higher order of Scottish attorneys. Fergusson had sensibility of mind, a warm and generous heart, and talents for society of the most attractive kind. To such a man, no situation could be more dangerous than that in which he was placed. The excesses into which he was led impaired his feeble constitution, and he sunk under them in the month of October, 1774, in his 23d or 24th year. Burns was not acquainted with the poems of this youthful genius, when he himself began to write poetry; and when he first saw them, he had renounced the muses. But, while he resided in the town of Irvine, meeting with *Fergusson's Scottish Poems*, he informs us that he "strung his lyre anew with emulating vigour†." Touched by the sympathy originating in kindred genius, and in the forebodings of similar fortune, Burns regarded Fergusson with a partial and affectionate admiration. Over his grave he erected a monument, as has already been mentioned, and his poems he has, in several instances, made the subjects of his imitation.

From this account of the Scottish poems known to Burns, those who are acquainted with them will see that they are chiefly humorous or pathetic, and under one or other of these descriptions most of his own poems will class. Let us compare him with his predecessors, under each of these points of view, and close our examination with a few general observations.

It has frequently been observed, that Scotland has produced, comparatively speaking, few writers who have excelled in humour. But this observation is true only when applied to those, who have continued to reside in their own country, and have confined themselves to composition in pure English; and, in these circumstances, it admits of an easy explanation. The Scottish poets, who have written in the dialect of Scotland, have been at all times remarkable for dwelling on subjects of humour, in which, indeed, many of them have excelled. It would be easy to show, that the dialect of Scotland, having become provincial, is now scarcely suited to the more elevated kinds of poetry. If we may believe that the poem of *Christis Kirk of the Grene*, was written by James the First of Scotland*, this accomplished monarch, who had received an English education under the direction of Henry the Fourth, and who bore arms under his gallant successor, gave the model on which the greater part of the humorous productions of the rustic muse of Scotland has been formed. *Christis Kirk of the Grene* was reprinted by Ramsay, somewhat modernized in the orthography, and two cantos were added by him, in which he attempts to carry on the design. Hence the poem of King James is usually printed in Ramsay's works. The royal bard describes, in the first canto, a rustic dance, and afterwards a contention in archery, ending in an affray. Ramsay relates the restoration of concord, and the renewal of the rural sports, with the humours of a country wedding. Though each of the poets describes the manners of his respective age, yet, in the whole piece, there is a very sufficient uniformity; a striking proof of the identity of character in the Scottish peasantry at the two periods, distant from each other three hundred years. It is an honourable distinction to this body of men, that their character and manners, very little embellished, have been found to be susceptible of an amusing and interesting species of poetry; and it must appear not a little curious, that the single nation of modern Europe, which possesses an original rural poetry, should have received the model followed by their rustic bards from the monarch on the throne.

* In the Supplement to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. See also *Campbell's Introduction to the History of Poetry in Scotland, p.* 288.

† See *p.* 13.

* Notwithstanding the evidence produced on this subject by Mr. Tytler, the editor acknowledges his being somewhat of a sceptic on this point. Sir David Dalrymple inclines to the opinion that it was written by his successor James the Fifth. There are difficulties attending this supposition also. But on the subject of Scottish antiquities, the editor is an incompetent judge.

The two additional cantos to *Christis Kirk of the Grene*, written by Ramsay, though objectionable in point of delicacy, are among the happiest of his productions. His chief excellence, indeed, lay in the description of rural characters, incidents, and scenery, for he did not possess any very high powers either of imagination or of understanding. He was well acquainted with the peasantry of Scotland, their lives and opinions. The subject was, in a great measure, new; his talents were equal to the subject; and he has shown that it may be happily adapted to pastoral poetry. In his *Gentle Shepherd*, the characters are delineations from nature, the descriptive parts are in the genuine style of beautiful simplicity, the passions and affections of rural life are finely pourtrayed, and the heart is pleasingly interested in the happiness that is bestowed on innocence and virtue. Throughout the whole, there is an air of reality which the most careless reader cannot but perceive; and, in fact, no poem ever, perhaps, acquired so high a reputation, in which truth received so little embellishment from the imagination. In his pastoral songs, and in his rural tales, Ramsay appears to less advantage, indeed, but still with considerable attraction. The story of the *Monk and the Miller's Wife*, though somewhat licentious, may rank with the happiest productions of Prior or La Fontaine. But when he attempts subjects from higher life, and aims at pure English composition, he is feeble and uninteresting, and seldom even reaches mediocrity*. Neither are his familiar epistles and elegies in the Scottish dialect entitled to much approbation. Though Fergusson had higher powers of imagination than Ramsay, his genius was not of the highest order; nor did his learning, which was considerable, improve his genius. His poems, written in pure English, in which he often follows classical models, though superior to the English poems of Ramsay, seldom rise above mediocrity; but in those composed in the Scottish dialect he is often very successful. He was in general, however, less happy than Ramsay in the subjects of his muse. As he spent the greater part of his life in Edinburgh, and wrote for his amusement in the intervals of business or dissipation, his Scottish poems are chiefly founded on the incidents of a town life, which, though they are susceptible of humour, do not admit of those delineations of scenery and manners, which vivify the rural poetry of Ramsay, and which so agreeably amuse the fancy and interest the heart. The town-eclogues of Fergusson, if we may so denominate them, are, however, faithful to nature, and often distinguished by a very happy vein of humour. His poems entitled *The Daft Days*, *The King's Birth-day in Edinburgh*, *Leith Races*, and *The Hallow-fair*, will justify this character. In these, particularly in the last, he imitated *Christis Kirk of the Grene*, as Ramsay had done before him. His *Address to the Tron-Kirk Bell* is an exquisite piece of humour, which Burns has scarcely excelled. In appreciating the genius of Fergusson, it ought to be recollected, that his poems are the careless effusions of an irregular, though amiable young man, who wrote for the periodical papers of the day, and who died in early youth. Had his life been prolonged under happier circumstances of fortune, he would probably have risen to much higher reputation. He might have excelled in rural poetry; for though his professed pastorals on the established Sicilian model, are stale and uninteresting, *The Farmer's Ingle**, which may be considered as a Scottish pastoral, is the happiest of all his productions, and certainly was the archetype of the *Cotter's Saturday Night*. Fergusson, and more especially Burns, have shown, that the character and manners of the peasantry of Scotland, of the present times, are as well adapted to poetry, as in the days of Ramsay, or of the author of *Christis Kirk of the Grene*.

The humour of Burns is of a richer vein than that of Ramsay or Fergusson, both of whom, as he himself informs us, he had "frequently in his eye, but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than to servile imitation†." His descriptive powers, whether the objects on which they are employed be comic or serious, animate or inanimate, are of the highest order. A superiority of this kind, is essential to every species of poetical excellence. In one of his earlier poems, his plan seems to inculcate a lesson of contentment on the lower classes of society, by showing that their superiors are neither much better nor happier than themselves; and this he chuses to execute in the form of a dialogue between two dogs. He introduces this dialogue by an account of the persons and characters of the speakers. The first, whom he has named *Cæsar*, is a dog of condition:

> "His locked, letter'd, braw brass collar,
> Show'd him the gentleman and scholar."

High-bred though he is, he is, however, full of condescension.

> "At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
> Nae tawted tyke, though e'er sae duddie,
> But he wad stan't, as glad to see him,
> *And stroan't on stanes an' hillocks wi' him.*"

The other, *Luath*, is a "ploughman's collie," but a cur of a good heart, and a sound understanding.

> "His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face,
> Ay gat him friends in ilka place.
> His breast was white, his towsie back
> Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
> *His gawcie tail, wi' upward curl,*
> *Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl.*"

Never were *twa dogs* so exquisitely delineated. Their gambols before they sit down to moralize, are described with an equal degree of happiness; and through the whole dialogue, the character, as well as the different condition of the two speakers, is kept in view. The speech of *Luath*, in which he enumerates the comforts of the poor,

* See *The Morning Interview*, &c.

* The farmer's fire-side.

† *See Appendix to Poems.*

gives the following account of their merriment on the first day of the year.

" That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty winds;
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
And sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
The luntin pipe, an' sneeshin mill,
Are handed round wi' right guid will;
The canty auld folks crackin crouse,
The young anes rantin thro' the house—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them."

Of all the animals who have moralized on human affairs since the days of Æsop, the dog seems best entitled to this privilege, as well from his superior sagacity, as from his being more than any other the friend and associate of man. The dogs of Burns, excepting in their talent for moralizing, are downright dogs; and not like the horses of Swift, or the *Hind and Panther* of Dryden, men in the shape of brutes. It is this circumstance that heightens the humour of the dialogue. The " twa dogs" are constantly kept before our eyes, and the contrast between their form and character as dogs, and the sagacity of their conversation, heightens the humour, and deepens the impression of the poet's satire. Though, in this poem, the chief excellence may be considered as humour, yet great talents are displayed in its composition; the happiest powers of description, and the deepest insight into the human heart*. It is seldom, however, that the humour of Burns appears in so simple a form. The liveliness of his sensibility frequently impels him to introduce into subjects of humour, emotions of tenderness or of pity, and, where occasion admits, he is sometimes carried on to exert the higher powers of imagination. In such instances he leaves the society of Ramsay and of Fergusson, and associates himself with the masters of English poetry, whose language he frequently assumes.

Of the union of tenderness and humour, examples may be found in *the Death and Dying Words of poor Maillie*, in *the Auld Farmer's New-Year's Morning Salutation to his Mare Maggie*, and in many of his other poems. The praise of whisky is a favourite subject with Burns. To this he dedicates his poem of *Scotch Drink*†. After mentioning its cheering influence in a variety of situations, he describes, with singular liveliness and power of fancy, its stimulating effects on the blacksmith working at his forge.

" Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel,
Brings hard owre-hip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong fore-hammer,
Till block an' studdie ring and reel
Wi' dinsome clamour."

On another occasion*, chusing to exalt whisky above wine, he introduces a comparison between the natives of more genial climes, to whom the vine furnishes their beverage, and his own countrymen, who drink the spirit of malt. The description of the Scotsman is humorous.

" But bring a Scotsman frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill†,
Say, such is royal George's will,
An' there's the foe,
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow."

Here the notion of danger rouses the imagination of the poet. He goes on thus:

" Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes—wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him;
An' when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin lea'es him
In faint huzzas."

Again, however, he sinks into humour, and concludes the poem with the following most laughable, but most irreverent apostrophe.

" Scotland, my auld, respected mither!
Tho' whiles ye moistify your leather,
Till whare ye sit, on craps o' heather,
Ye tine your dam;
Freedom and *whisky* gang thegither,
Tak aff your dram!"

Of this union of humour with the higher powers of imagination, instances may be found in the poem entitled *Death and Dr. Hornbook*, and in almost every stanza of the *Address to the Deil*, one of the happiest of his productions. After reproaching this terrible being with all his " doings" and misdeeds, in the course of which he passes through a series of Scottish superstitions, and rises at times into a high strain of poetry, he concludes this address, delivered in a tone of great familiarity, not altogether unmixed with apprehension, in the following words.

" But, fare ye weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—

* When this poem first appeared, it was thought by some very surprising, that a peasant, who had not had an opportunity of associating even with a simple gentleman, should have been able to pourtray the character of high-life with such accuracy. And when it was recollected that he had probably been at the races of Ayr, where nobility as well as gentry are to be seen, it was concluded that the race-ground had been the field of his observation. This was sagacious enough—but it did not require such instruction to inform Burns, that human nature is essentially the same in the high and the low; and a genius which comprehends the human mind, easily comprehends the accidental varieties introduced by situation.

† *See Poems.*

* *The Author's earnest Cry and Prayer to the Scotch Representatives in Parliament.*

† Of whisky.

Still hae a stake—
I'm wae to think upo' yon den
Ev'n for your sake!"

Humour and tenderness are here so happily intermixed, that it is impossible to say which preponderates.

Fergusson wrote a dialogue between the *Causeway* and the *Plainstones** of Edinburgh. This probably suggested to Burns his dialogue between the Old and the New Bridge over the river Ayr†. The nature of such subjects requires that they shall be treated humorously, and Fergusson has attempted nothing beyond this. Though the *Causeway* and the *Plainstones* talk together, no attempt is made to personify the speakers. A "cadie‡" heard the conversation, and reported it to the poet.

In the dialogue between the "*Brigs of Ayr*," Burns himself is the auditor, and the time and occasion on which it occurred, is related with great circumstantiality. The poet, "pressed by care," or "inspired by whim," had left his bed, in the town of Ayr, and wandered out alone in the darkness and solitude of a winter night, to the mouth of the river, where the stillness was interrupted only by the rushing sound of the influx of the tide. It was after midnight. The dungeon-clock§ had struck two, and the sound had been repeated by Wallace-Tower§. All else was hushed. The moon shone brightly, and

"The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,
Crept gently-crusting o'er the glittering stream."

In this situation, the listening bard hears the "clanging sugh" of wings moving through the air, and speedily he perceives two beings, reared, the one on the Old, the other on the New Bridge, whose form and attire he describes, and whose conversation with each other he rehearses. These genii enter into a comparison of the respective edifices over which they preside, and afterwards, as is usual between the old and young, compare modern characters and manners with those of past times. They differ, as may be expected, and taunt and scold each other in broad Scotch. This conversation, which is certainly humorous, may be considered as the proper business of the poem. As the debate runs high, and threatens serious consequences, all at once it is interrupted by a new scene of wonders.

"——————— all before their sight
A fairy train appeared in order bright:
Adown the glittering stream they featly danced;
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanced:
They footed o'er the wat'ry glass so neat,
The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet:
While arts of minstrelsy among them rung,
And soul-ennobling bards heroic ditties sung."

* * * *

"The Genius of the Stream in front appears,
A venerable chief, advanced in years;
His hoary head with water-lilies crowned,
His manly leg with garter tangle bound."

Next follow a number of other allegorical beings, among whom are the four Seasons, Rural Joy, Plenty, Hospitality, and Courage.

"Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,
A female form, came from the tow'rs of Stair:
Learning and Worth in equal measures trode,
From simple Catrine, their long-loved abode:
Last, white-robed Peace, crowned with a hazel-wreath,
To rustic Agriculture did bequeath
The broken iron instrument of Death;
At sight of whom our sprites forgat their kindling wrath."

This poem, irregular and imperfect as it is, displays various and powerful talents, and may serve to illustrate the genius of Burns. In particular, it affords a striking instance of his being carried beyond his original purpose by the powers of imagination.

In Fergusson's poem, the *Plainstones* and *Causeway* contrast the characters of the different persons who walked upon them. Burns probably conceived that, by a dialogue between the Old and New Bridge, he might form a humorous contrast between ancient and modern manners in the town of Ayr. Such a dialogue could only be supposed to pass in the stillness of night, and this led our poet into a description of a midnight scene, which excited, in a high degree, the powers of his imagination. During the whole dialogue the scenery is present to his fancy, and at length it suggests to him a fairy dance of aerial beings, under the beams of the moon, by which the wrath of the genii of the *Brigs of Ayr* is appeased.

Incongruous as the different parts of this poem are, it is not an incongruity that displeases, and we have only to regret that the poet did not bestow a little pains in making the figures more correct, and in smoothing the versification.

The epistles of Burns, in which may be included his *Dedication to G. H., esq.* discover, like his other writings, the powers of a superior understanding. They display deep insight into human nature, a gay and happy strain of reflection, great independence of sentiment, and generosity of heart. It is to be regretted, that in his *Holy Fair*, and in some of his other poems, his humour degenerates into personal satire, and that it is not sufficiently guarded in other respects. The *Halloween* of Burns is free from every objection of this sort. It is interesting not merely from its humorous description of manners, but as it records the spells and charms used on the celebration of a festival, now even in Scotland falling into neglect, but which was once observed over th greater part of Britain and Ireland*. These

* The *middle of the street*, and the *side-way*.
† *The Brigs of Ayr*. ‡ A messenger.
§ The two steeples of Ayr.

* In Ireland it is still celebrated. It is not quite in disuse in Wales.

charms are supposed to afford an insight into futurity, especially on the subject of marriage, the most interesting event of rural life. In the *Halloween*, a female, in performing one of the spells, has occasion to go out by moon-light, to dip her shift-sleeve into a stream *running towards the south**. It was not necessary for Burns to give a description of this stream. But it was the character of his ardent mind, to pour forth not merely what the occasion required, but what it admitted; and the temptation to describe so beautiful a natural object by moon-light, was not to be resisted—

> " Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays
> As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
> Whyles round a rocky scar it strays;
> Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
> Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
> Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
> Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
> Beneath the spreading hazle,
> Unseen that night."

Those who understand the Scottish dialect will allow this to be one of the finest instances of description, which the records of poetry afford. Though of a very different nature, it may be compared, in point of excellence, with Thomson's description of a river swollen by the rains of winter, bursting through the straights that confine its torrent, " boiling, wheeling, foaming, and thundering along†."

In pastoral, or, to speak more correctly, in rural poetry, of a serious nature, Burns excelled equally as in that of a humorous kind, and using less of the Scottish dialect in his serious poems, he becomes more generally intelligible. It is difficult to decide whether *the Address to a Mouse whose nest was turned up with the plough‡*, should be considered as serious or comic. Be this as it may, the poem is one of the happiest, and most finished of his productions. If we smile at the " bickering brattle" of this little flying animal, it is a smile of tenderness and pity. The descriptive part is admirable; the moral reflections beautiful, and arising directly out of the occasion; and in the conclusion, there is a deep melancholy, a sentiment of doubt and dread, that rises to the sublime. The *Address to a Mountain Daisy, turned down with the plough§*, is a poem of the same nature, though somewhat inferior in point of originality, as well as in the interest produced. To extract out of incidents so common, and seemingly so trivial as these, so fine a train of sentiment and imagery, is the surest proof, as well as the most brilliant triumph, of original genius. *The Vision*, in two cantos, from which a beautiful extract is taken by Mr. Mackenzie, in the 97th number of the *Lounger*, is a poem of great and various excellence. The opening, in which the poet describes his own state of mind, retiring in the evening, wearied from the labours of the day, to moralize on his conduct and prospects, is truly interesting. The chamber, if we may so term it, in which he sits down to muse, is an exquisite painting.

> " There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek
> I sat and eyed the spewing reek,
> That filled, wi' hoast-provoking smeek,
> The auld, clay biggin;
> An' heard the restless rattons squeak
> About the riggin."

To reconcile to our imagination, the entrance of an aerial being into a mansion of this kind, required the powers of Burns—he, however, succeeds. Coila enters, and her countenance, attitude, and dress, unlike those of other spiritual beings, are distinctly pourtrayed. To the painting on her mantle, on which is depicted the most striking scenery, as well as the most distinguished characters, of his native country, some exceptions may be made. The mantle of Coila, like the cup of Thyrsis*, and the shield of Achilles, is too much crowded with figures, and some of the objects represented upon it, are scarcely admissible according to the principles of design. The generous temperament of Burns, led him into these exuberances. In his second edition he enlarged the number of figures originally introduced, that he might include objects to which he was attached by sentiments of affection, gratitude, or patriotism. The second *duan* or canto of this poem, in which Coila describes her own nature and occupations, particularly her superintendence of his infant genius, and in which she reconciles him to the character of a bard, is an elevated and solemn strain of poetry, ranking in all respects, excepting the harmony of numbers, with the higher productions of the English muse. The concluding stanza, compared with that already quoted, will show to what a height Burns rises in this poem, from the point at which he set out.

> " *And wear thou this*—she solemn said,
> And bound the *holly* round my head;
> The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
> Did rustling play;
> And, like a passing thought, she fled
> In light away."

In various poems, Burns has exhibited the picture of a mind under the deep impressions of real sorrow. The *Lament*, the *Ode to Ruin*, *Despondency*, and *Winter, a dirge*, are of this character. In the first of these poems, the eighth stanza, which describes a sleepless night from anguish of mind, is particularly striking. Burns often indulged in those melancholy views of the nature and condition of man, which are so congenial to the temperament of sensibility. The poem entitled, *Man was made to Mourn*, affords an instance of this kind, and *the Winter Night*†, is of the same description. This last is highly characteristic, both of the temper of mind, and of the condition of Burns. It begins with a description of a

* *See Poems.* † See Thomson's *Winter.*
‡ *See Poems.* § *Ibid.*

* See the first *Idyllium* of Theocritus.
† *See Poems.*

dreadful storm on a night in winter. The poet represents himself as lying in bed, and listening to its howling. In this situation he naturally turns his thoughts to the *ourie* cattle*, and the *silly† sheep*, exposed to all the violence of the tempest. Having lamented their fate, he proceeds in the following manner.

" Ilk happing bird—wee, helpless thing!
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?"

Other reflections of the same nature occur to his mind; and, as the midnight moon, " muffled with clouds," casts her dreary light on his window, thoughts of a darker and more melancholy nature crowd upon him. In this state of mind, he hears a voice pouring through the gloom a solemn and plaintive strain of reflection. The mourner compares the fury of the elements with that of man to his brother man, and finds the former light in the balance.

" See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's goary hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, want, and murder, o'er the land."—

He pursues this train of reflection through a variety of particulars, in the course of which, he introduces the following animated apostrophe.

" O ye! who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfy'd keen Nature's clam'rous call,
Stretch'd on his straw he lays him down to sleep,
While thro' the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill o'er his slumbers, piles the drifty heap!"

The strain of sentiment which runs through this poem is noble, though the execution is unequal, and the versification is defective.

Among the serious poems of Burns, *The Cotter's Saturday Night* is perhaps entitled to the first rank. *The Farmer's Ingle* of Fergusson evidently suggested the plan of this poem, as has already been mentioned; but, after the plan was formed, Burns trusted entirely to his own powers for the execution. Fergusson's poem is certainly very beautiful. It has all the charms which depend on rural characters and manners happily pourtrayed, and exhibited under circumstances highly grateful to the imagination. *The Farmer's Ingle* begins with describing the return of evening. The toils of the day are over, and the farmer retires to his comfortable fire-side. The reception which he and his men-servants receive from the careful house-wife, is pleasingly described. After their supper is over, they begin to talk on the rural events of the day.

" 'Bout kirk and market eke their tales gae on,
How *Jock* woo'd *Jenny* here to be his bride;
And there how *Marion* for a bastar, son,
Upo' the cutty-stool was forc'd to ride.
The waefu' scauld o' our *Mess John* to bide."

The " gudame" is next introduced as forming a circle round the fire, in the midst of her grandchildren, and while she spins from the rock, and the spindle plays on her " russet lap," she is relating to the young ones, tales of witches and ghosts. The poet exclaims,

" O mock na this, my friends! but rather mourn,
Ye in life's brawest spring wi' reason clear,
Wi' eild our idle fancies a' return,
And dim our dolefu' days wi' bairnly fear;
The minds aye *cradled* when the *grave* is near."

In the mean time the farmer, wearied with the fatigues of the day, stretches himself at length on the *settle*, a sort of rustic couch which extends on one side of the fire, and the cat and house-dog leap upon it to receive his caresses. Here, resting at his ease, he gives his directions to his men-servants for the succeeding day. The house-wife follows his example, and gives her orders to the maidens. By degrees the oil in the cruise begins to fail; the fire runs low; sleep steals on this rustic group; and they move off to enjoy their peaceful slumbers. The poet concludes by bestowing his blessing on the " husbandman and all his tribe."

This is an original and truly interesting pastoral. It possesses every thing required in this species of composition. We might have perhaps said, every thing that it admits, had not Burns written his *Cotter's Saturday Night*.

The cottager, returning from his labours, has no servants to accompany him, to partake of his fare, or to receive his instructions. The circle which he joins, is composed of his wife and children only; and, if it admits of less variety, it affords an opportunity for representing scenes that more strongly interest the affections. The younger children running to meet him, and clambering round his knee; the elder, returning from their weekly labours with the neighbouring farmers, dutifully depositing their little gains with their parents, and receiving their father's blessing and instructions; the incidents of the courtship of Jenny, their eldest daughter, " woman grown;" are circumstances of the most interesting kind, which are most happily delineated: and, after their frugal supper, the representation of these humble cottagers forming a wider circle round their hearth, and uniting in the worship of God, is a picture the most deeply affecting of any which the rural muse has ever presented to the view. Burns was admirably adapted to this delineation. Like all men of genius, he was of the tempera-

* *Ourie*, out-lying. *Ourie cattle*, cattle that are unhoused all winter.

† *Silly* is in this, as in other places, a term of compassion and endearment.

ment of devotion, and the powers of memory co-operated, in this instance, with the sensibility of his heart, and the fervour of his imagination*. *The Cotter's Saturday Night* is tender and moral, it is solemn and devotional, and rises at length into a strain of grandeur and sublimity, which modern poetry has not surpassed. The noble sentiments of patriotism with which it concludes, correspond with the rest of the poem. In no age or country have the pastoral muses breathed such elevated accents, if the *Messiah* of Pope be excepted, which is indeed a pastoral in form only. It is to be regretted, that Burns did not employ his genius on other subjects of the same nature, which the manners and customs of the Scottish peasantry would have amply supplied. Such poetry is not to be estimated by the degree of pleasure which it bestows; it sinks deeply into the heart, and is calculated, far beyond any other human means, for giving permanence to the scenes and the characters it so exquisitely describes†.

Before we conclude, it will be proper to offer a few observations on the lyric productions of Burns. His compositions of this kind are chiefly songs, generally in the Scottish dialect, and always after the model of the Scottish songs, on the general character and moral influence of which, some observations have already been offered‡. We may hazard a few more particular remarks.

Of the historic or heroic ballads of Scotland, it is unnecessary to speak. Burns has no where imitated them, a circumstance to be regretted, since, in this species of composition, from its admitting the more terrible, as well as the softer graces of poetry, he was eminently qualified to have excelled. The Scottish songs which served as a model to Burns, are almost without exception pastoral, or rather rural. Such of them as are comic, frequently treat of a rustic courtship, or a country wedding; or they describe the differences of opinion which arise in married life. Burns has imitated this species, and surpassed his models. The song beginning, "Husband, husband, cease your strife§," may be cited in support of this observation‖. His other comic songs are of equal merit. In the rural songs of Scotland, whether humorous or tender, the sentiments are given to particular characters, and, very generally, the incidents are referred to particular scenery. This last circumstance may be considered as the distinguishing feature of the Scottish songs, and on it a considerable part of their attraction depends. On all occasions, the sentiments, of whatever nature, are delivered in the character of the person principally interested. If love be described, it is not as it is observed, but as it is felt; and the passion is delineated under a particular aspect. Neither is it the fiercer impulses of desire that are expressed, as in the celebrated ode of Sappho, the model of so many modern songs; but those gentler emotions of tenderness and affection, which do not entirely absorb the lover, but permit him to associate his emotions with the charms of external nature, and breathe the accents of purity and innocence, as well as of love. In these respects the love-songs of Scotland are honourably distinguished from the most admired classical compositions of the same kind; and by such associations a variety, as well as liveliness, is given to the representation of this passion, which are not to be found in the poetry of Greece or Rome, or perhaps of any other nation. Many of the love-songs of Scotland describe scenes of rural courtship; many may be considered as invocations from lovers to their mistresses. On such occasions, a degree of interest and reality is given to the sentiments, by the spot destined to these happy interviews being particularized. The lovers perhaps meet at the *Bush aboon Traquair*, or on the *Banks of Etrick*; the nymphs are invoked to wander among the wilds of *Roslin*, or *the woods of Invermay*. Nor is the spot merely pointed out; the scenery is often described as well as the characters, so as to present a complete picture to the fancy*. Thus the maxim of Horace, *ut pic-*

* The reader will recollect that the Cotter was Burns' father. *See p.* 19.

† See Appendix, *No.* II. *Note* D.

‡ See *p.* 4.

§ *See Correspondence with Mr. Thomson, No.* XLIX.

‖ The dialogues between husbands and their wives which form the subjects of the Scottish songs, are almost all ludicrous and satirical, and in these contests the lady is generally victorious. From the collections of Mr. Pinkerton, we find that the comic muse of Scotland delighted in such representations from very early times, in her rude dramatic efforts, as well as in her rustic songs.

* One or two examples may illustrate this observation. A Scottish song, written about a hundred years ago, begins thus:

"On Etrick banks, on a summer's night,
At gloaming, when the sheep drove hame,
I met my lassie, braw and tight,
Come wading barefoot a' her lane:

My heart grew light, I ran, I flang
My arms about her lily neck,
And kiss'd and clasped there fu' lang,
My words they were na mony feck*."

The lover, who is a Highlander, goes on to relate the language he employed with this Lowland maid to win her heart, and to persuade her to fly with him to the Highland hills, there to share his fortune. The sentiments are in themselves beautiful. But we feel them with double force, while we conceive that they were addressed by a lover to his mistress, whom he met all alone, on a summer's evening, by the banks of a beautiful stream, which some of us have actually seen, and which all of us can paint to our imagination. Let us take another example. It is now a nymph that speaks. Hear how she expresses herself.

* * * * * * * * *

* *Na mony feck*—not very many.

ture poesis, is faithfully observed by these rustic bards, who are guided by the same impulse of nature and sensibility which influenced the father of epic poetry, on whose example the precept of the Roman poet was perhaps founded. By this means, the imagination is employed to interest the feelings. When we do not conceive distinctly, we do not sympathize deeply in any human affection; and we conceive nothing in the abstract. Abstraction, so useful in morals, and so essential in science, must be abandoned when the heart is to be subdued by the powers of poetry or of eloquence. The bards of a ruder condition of society, paint individual objects; and hence, among other causes, the easy access they obtain to the heart. Generalization is the vice of poets whose learning overpowers their genius; of poets of a refined and scientific age.

The dramatic style which prevails so much in the Scottish songs, while it contributes greatly to the interest they excite, also shows that they have originated among a people in the earlier stages of society. Where this form of composition appears in songs of a modern date, it indicates that they have been written after the ancient model*.

" How blythe each morn was I to see
My swain come o'er the hill!
He skipt the burn, and flew to me,
I met him with gude will."

Here is another picture drawn by the pencil of nature. We see a shepherdess standing by the side of a brook, watching her lover as he descends the opposite hill. He bounds lightly along; he approaches nearer and nearer; he leaps the brook, and flies into her arms. In the recollection of these circumstances, the surrounding scenery becomes endeared to the fair mourner, and she bursts into the following exclamation.

" O the broom, the bonnie, bonnie broom,
The broom of the Cowden-Knowes!
I wish I were with my dear swain,
With his pipe and my ewes."

Thus the individual spot of this happy interview is pointed out, and the picture is completed.

* That the dramatic form of writing characterizes the productions of an early, or, what amounts to the same thing, of a rude stage of society, may be illustrated by a reference to the most ancient compositions that we know of, the Hebrew scriptures and the writings of Homer. The form of dialogue is adopted in the old Scottish ballads even in narration, whenever the situations described become interesting. This sometimes produces a very striking effect, of which an instance may be given from the ballad of *Edom o' Gordon*, a composition apparently of the sixteenth century. The story of the ballad is shortly this.—The castle of Rhodes, in the absence of its lord, is attacked by the robber Edom o' Gordon. The lady stands on her defence, beats off the assailants, and wounds Gordon, who in his rage orders the castle to be set on fire. That his orders are carried into effect, we learn from the expostulation of the lady, who is represented as standing on the battlements, and remonstrating on this barbarity. She is interrupted—

O then bespak hir little son,
Sate on his nourice' knee;
Says, ' mither dear, gi' owre this house,
For the reek it smithers me.'
" I wad gie a' my gowd, my childe,
Sae wad I a' my fee,
For ae blast o' the westlin wind
To blaw the reek frae thee."

The circumstantiality of the Scottish love-songs, and the dramatic form which prevails so generally in them, probably arises from their being the descendants and successors of the ancient ballads. In the beautiful modern song of *Mary of Castle-Cary*, the dramatic form has a very happy effect. The same may be said of *Donald and Flora*, and *Come under my plaidie*, by the same author, Mr. Macniel.

The Scottish songs are of very unequal poetical merit, and this inequality often extends to the different parts of the same song. Those that are humorous, or characteristic of manners, have, in general, the merit of copying nature; those that are serious, are tender, and often sweetly interesting, but seldom exhibit high powers of imagination, which indeed do not easily find a place in this species of composition. The alliance of the words of the Scottish songs with the music, has in some instances given to the former a popularity, which otherwise they would not have obtained.

The association of the words and the music of these songs, with the more beautiful parts of the scenery of Scotland, contributes to the same effect. It has given them not merely popularity, but permanence; it has imparted to the works of man, some portion of the durability of the works of nature. If, from our imperfect experience of the past, we may judge with any confidence respecting the future, songs of this description are, of all others, least likely to die. In the changes of language they may no doubt suffer change; but the associated strain of sentiment and of music, will perhaps survive, while the clear stream sweeps down the vale of Yarrow, or the yellow broom waves on the Cowden-Knowes.

The first attempts of Burns in song-writing, were not very successful. His habitual inattention to the exactness of rhymes, and to the harmony of numbers, arising probably from the models on which his versification was formed, were faults likely to appear to more disadvantage in this species of composition, than in any other; and we may also remark, that the strength of his imagination, and the exuberance of his sensibility, were with difficulty restrained within the limits of gentleness, delicacy, and tenderness, which seem to be assigned to the love-songs of his nation. Burns was better adapted by nature for following, in such compositions, the model of the Grecian, than of the Scottish muse. By study and practice, he however surmounted all these obstacles. In his earlier songs, there is some ruggedness; but this gradually disappears in his successive efforts; and some of

his latter compositions of this kind, may be compared, in polished delicacy, with the finest songs in our language, while, in the eloquence of sensibility, they surpass them all.

The songs of Burns, like the model he followed and excelled, are often dramatic, and for the greater part amatory; and the beauties of rural nature are every where associated with the passions and emotions of the mind. Disdaining to copy the works of others, he has not, like some poets of great name, admitted into his descriptions exotic imagery. The landscapes he has painted, and the objects with which they are embellished, are, in every single instance, such as are to be found in his own country. In a mountainous region, especially when it is comparatively rude and naked, the most beautiful scenery will always be found in the valleys, and on the banks of the wooded streams. Such scenery is peculiarly interesting at the close of a summer-day. As we advance northwards, the number of the days of summer indeed diminishes; but from this cause, as well as from the mildness of the temperature, the attraction of the season increases, and the summer-night becomes still more beautiful. The greater obliquity of the sun's path on the ecliptic, prolongs the grateful season of twilight to the midnight hours, and the shades of the evening seem to mingle with the morning's dawn. The rural poets of Scotland, as may be expected, associate in their songs the expressions of passion, with the most beautiful of their scenery, in the fairest season of the year, and generally in those hours of the evening when the beauties of nature are most interesting*.

To all these adventitious circumstances, on which so much of the effect of poetry depends, great attention is paid by Burns. There is scarcely a single song of his, in which particular scenery is not described, or allusions made to natural objects, remarkable for beauty or interest; and though his descriptions are not so full as are sometimes met with in the older Scottish songs, they are in the highest degree appropriate and interesting. Instances in proof of this might be quoted from *the Lea-Rig**, *Highland Mary**, *the Soldier's Return**, *Lugan Water**; from that beautiful pastoral *Bonnie Jean**, and a great number of others. Occasionally the force of this genius carries him beyond the usual boundaries of Scottish song, and the natural objects introduced, have more of the character of sublimity. An instance of this kind is noticed by Mr. Syme†, and many others might be adduced.

"Had I a cave on some wild distant shore,
Where the winds howl to the wave's dashing roar?
There would I weep my woes,
There seek my lost repose,
'Till grief my eyes should close,
Ne'er to wake more‡."

In one song, the scene of which is laid in a winter night, the "wan moon" is described as "setting behind the white waves§;" in another "the storms" are apostrophized, and commanded to "rest in the cave of their slumbers‖." On several occasions, the genius of Burns loses sight entirely of his archetypes, and rises into a strain of uniform sublimity. Instances of this kind appear in *Libertie, a Vision***, and in his two war-songs, *Bruce to his Troops††*, and the *Song of Death‡‡*. These last are of a description of which we have no other in our language. The martial songs of our nation, are not military, but naval. If we were to seek a comparison of these songs of Burns, with others of a similar nature, we must have recourse to the poetry of ancient Greece, or of modern Gaul.

Burns has made an important addition to the songs of Scotland. In his compositions the poetry equals, and sometimes surpasses the music. He has enlarged the poetical scenery of his country. Many of her rivers and mountains, formerly unknown to the muse, are now consecrated by his immortal verse. The Doon, the Lugar, the Ayr, the Nith, and the Cluden—will in future, like the Yarrow, the Tweed, and the Tay, be considered as classic streams, and their borders will be trod with new and superior emotions.

The greater part of the songs of Burns were written after he removed into the county of Dumfries. Influenced perhaps by habits formed in early life, he usually composed while walking in the open air. When engaged in writing these songs,

* A lady, of whose genius the editor entertains high admiration (Mrs. Barbauld), has fallen into an error in this respect. In her prefatory address to the works of Collins speaking of the natural objects that may be employed to give interest to the descriptions of passion, she observes, "they present an inexhaustible variety, from the Song of Solomon, breathing of cassia, myrrh, and cinnamon, to the Gentle Shepherd of Ramsay, whose damsels carry their milking pails through the frosts and snows of their less genial, but not less pastoral country." The damsels of Ramsay do not walk in the midst of frost and snow.—Almost all the scenes of the Gentle Shepherd are laid in the open air, amidst beautiful natural objects, and at the most genial season of the year. Ramsay introduces all his acts with a prefatory description to assure us of this. The fault of the climate of Britain, is not that it does not afford us the beauties of summer, but that the season of such beauties is comparatively short, and even uncertain. There are days and nights, even in the northern division of the island, which equal, or perhaps surpass, what are to be found in the latitude of Sicily or of Greece. Buchanan, when he wrote his exquisite ode to May, felt the charm as well as the transientness of these happy days.

Salve fugacis gloria seculi,
Salve secunda digna dies nota,
Salve vestustæ vitæ imago,
Et specimen venientis Ævi!

* See *Correspondence with Mr. Thomson.*
† See *p.* 46 of this volume.
‡ See *Correspondence with Mr. Thomson.*
§ Ibid. ‖ Ibid.
** See *Poems.*
†† See *Correspondence with Mr. Thomson.*
‡‡ See *p.* 47 of this volume.

his favourite walks were on the banks of the Nith, or of the Cluden, particularly near the ruins of Lincluden Abbey; and this beautiful scenery he has very happily described under various aspects, as it appears during the softness and serenity of evening, and during the stillness and solemnity of the moon-light night*.

There is no species of poetry, the productions of the drama not excepted, so much calculated to influence the morals, as well as the happiness of a people, as those popular verses which are associated with national airs, and which, being learnt in the years of infancy, make a deep impression on the heart, before the evolution of the powers of the understanding. The compositions of Burns of this kind, now presented in a collected form to the world, make a most important addition to the popular songs of his nation. Like all his other writings, they exhibit independence of sentiment; they are peculiarly calculated to increase those ties which bind generous hearts to their native soil, and to the domestic circle of their infancy; and to cherish those sensibilities, which, under due restriction, form the purest happiness of our nature. If in his unguarded moments he composed some songs on which this praise cannot be bestowed, let us hope that they will speedily be forgotten. In several instances, where Scottish airs were allied to words objectionable in point of delicacy, Burns has substituted others of a purer character. On such occasions, without changing the subject, he has changed the sentiments. A proof of this may be seen in the air, *John Anderson my Joe*, which is now united to words that breathe a strain of conjugal tenderness, that is as highly moral as it is exquisitely affecting.

Few circumstances could afford a more striking proof of the strength of Burns' genius, than the general circulation of his poems in England, notwithstanding the dialect in which the greater part are written, and which might be supposed to render them here uncouth or obscure. In some instances he has used this dialect on subjects of a sublime nature; but in general he confines it to sentiments or description of a tender or humorous kind; and, where he rises into elevation of thought, he assumes a purer English style. The singular faculty he possessed of mingling in the same poem, humorous sentiments and descriptions, with imagery of a sublime and terrific nature, enabled him to use this variety of dialect on some occasions with striking effect. His poem of *Tam o' Shanter*, affords an instance of this. There he passes from a scene of the lowest humour, to situations of the most awful and terrible kind. He is a musician that runs from the lowest to the highest of his keys, and the use of the Scottish dialect, enables him to add two additional notes to the bottom of his scale.

Great efforts have been made by the inhabitants of Scotland of the superior ranks, to approximate in their speech to the pure English standard; and this has made it difficult to write in the Scottish dialect, without exciting in them some feelings of disgust, which in England are scarcely felt. An Englishman who understands the meaning of the Scottish words, is not offended, nay, on certain subjects, he is perhaps pleased, with the rustic dialect, as he may be with the Doric Greek of Theocritus.

But a Scotchman inhabiting his own country, if a man of education, and more especially if a literary character, has banished such words from his writings, and has attempted to banish them from his speech; and being accustomed to hear them from the vulgar daily, does not easily admit of their use in poetry, which requires a style elevated and ornamental. A dislike of this kind is, however, accidental, not natural. It is of the species of disgust which we feel at seeing a female of high birth, in the dress of a rustic; which, if she be really young and beautiful, a little habit will enable us to overcome. A lady who assumes such a dress, puts her beauty indeed to a severer trial. She rejects—she indeed opposes the influence of fashion; she possibly abandons the grace of elegant and flowing drapery; but her native charms remain, the more striking perhaps, because the less adorned; and to these she trusts for fixing her empire on those affections over which fashion has no sway. If she succeeds, a new association arises. The dress of the beautiful rustic becomes itself beautiful, and establishes a new fashion for the young and the gay. And when, in after ages, the contemplative observer shall view her picture in the gallery that contains the portraits of the beauties of successive centuries, each in the dress of her respective day, her drapery will not deviate more than that of her rivals, from the standard of his taste, and he will give the palm to her who excels in the lineaments of nature.

Burns wrote professedly for the peasantry of his country, and by them their native dialect is universally relished. To a numerous class of the natives of Scotland of another description, it may also be considered as attractive in a different point of view. Estranged from their native soil, and spread over foreign lands, the idiom of their country unites with the sentiments and the descriptions on which it is employed, to recal to their minds the interesting scenes of infancy and youth—to awaken many pleasing, many tender recollections. Literary men, residing at Edinburgh or Aberdeen, cannot judge on this point for one hundred and fifty thousand of their expatriated countrymen*.

* See *Correspondence with Mr. Thomson*, No. LVI, and *Poems*.

* These observations are excited by some remarks of respectable correspondents of the description alluded to. This calculation of the number of Scotchmen living out of Scotland is not altogether arbitrary, and it is probably below the truth. It is in some degree founded on the proportion between the number of the sexes *in Scotland*, as it appears from the invaluable Statistics of Sir John Sinclair.—For Scotchmen of this description more particularly, Burns seems to have written his song beginning, *Their groves o' sweet myrtle*, a beautiful strain, which, it may be confidently predicted, will be sung with equal or superior interest, on the banks of the Ganges or of the Mississippi, as on those of the Tay or the Tweed.

To the use of the Scottish dialect in one species of poetry, the composition of songs, the taste of the public has been for some time reconciled. The dialect in question excels, as has already been observed, in the copiousness and exactness of its terms for natural objects; and in pastoral or rural songs, it gives a Doric simplicity, which is very generally approved. Neither does the regret seem well founded, which some persons of taste have expressed, that Burns used this dialect in so many other of his compositions. His declared purpose was to paint the manners of rustic life among his "humble compeers," and it is not easy to conceive, that this could have been done with equal humour and effect, if he had not adopted their idiom. There are some indeed who will think the subject too low for poetry. Persons of this sickly taste, will find their delicacies consulted in many a polite and learned author; let them not seek for gratification in the rough and vigorous lines, in the unbridled humour, or in the overpowering sensibility of this bard of nature.

To determine the comparative merit of Burns would be no easy task. Many persons, afterwards distinguished in literature, have been born in as humble a situation of life, but it would be difficult to find any other, who, while earning his subsistence by daily labour, has written verses which have attracted and retained universal attention, and which are likely to give the author a permanent and distinguished place among the followers of the muses. If he is deficient in grace, he is distinguished for ease, as well as energy; and these are indications of the higher order of genius. The father of epic poetry exhibits one of his heroes as excelling in strength, another in swiftness—to form his perfect warrior, these attributes are combined. Every species of intellectual superiority admits perhaps of a similar arrangement. One writer excels in force; another in ease—he is superior to them both, in whom both these qualities are united. Of Homer himself it may be said, that, like his own Achilles, he surpasses his competitors in mobility as well as strength.

The force of Burns lay in the powers of his understanding and in the sensibility of his heart; and these will be found to infuse the living principle into all the works of genius which seem destined to immortality. His sensibility had an uncommon range. He was alive to every species of emotion. He is one of the few poets that can be mentioned, who have at once excelled in humour, in tenderness, and in sublimity; a praise unknown to the ancients, and which in modern times is only due to Ariosto, to Shakespeare, and perhaps to Voltaire. To compare the writings of this Scottish peasant, with the works of these giants in literature, might appear presumptuous; yet it may be asserted, that he has displayed *the foot of Hercules*. How near he might have approached them, by proper culture, with lengthened years, and under happier auspices, it is not for us to calculate. But, while we run over the melancholy story of his life, it is impossible not to heave a sigh at the asperity of his fortune; and, as we survey the records of his mind, it is easy to see, that out of such materials have been reared the fairest and the most durable of the monuments of genius,

A GREAT number of poems have been written on the death of Burns, some of them of considerable poetical merit. To have subjoined all of them to the present edition, would have been to have enlarged it to another volume at least; and to have made a selection, would have been a task of considerable delicacy.

The editor therefore presents one poem only on this melancholy subject; a poem which has not before appeared in print. It is from the pen of one who has sympathized deeply in the fate of Burns, and will not be found unworthy of its author—the biographer of *Lorenzo de' Medici*. Of a person so well known, it is wholly unnecessary for the editor to speak; and, if it were necessary, it would not be easy for him to find language that would adequately express his respect and his affection.

REAR high thy bleak majestic hills,
Thy shelter'd valleys proudly spread,
And, *Scotia*, pour thy thousand rills,
And wave thy heaths with blossoms red;
But ah! what poet now shall tread
Thy airy heights, thy woodland reign,
Since he, the sweetest bard is dead
That ever breath'd the soothing strain?

As green thy towering pines may grow,
As clear thy stream may speed along,
As bright thy summer suns may glow,
As gayly charm thy feathery throng;
But now, unheeded is the song,
And dull and lifeless all around,
For his wild-harp lies all unstrung,
And cold the hand that wak'd its sound.

What tho' thy vigorous offspring rise,
In arts, in arms, thy sons excel;
Tho' beauty in thy daughters' eyes,
And health in every feature dwell;
Yet who shall now their praises tell,
In strains impassion'd, fond, and free,
Since he no more the song shall swell
To love, and liberty, and thee?

With step-dame eye and frown severe
His hapless youth why didst thou view?
For all thy joys to him were dear,
And all his vows to thee were due;
Nor greater bliss his bosom knew,
In opening youth's delightful prime,
Than when thy favouring ear he drew
To listen to his chaunted rhyme.

Thy lonely wastes and frowning skies
To him were all with rapture fraught;
He heard with joy the tempest rise
That wak'd him to sublimer thought;
And oft thy winding dells he sought,
Where wild flowers pour'd their rathe perfume,
And with sincere devotion brought
To thee the summer's earliest bloom.

But ah! no fond maternal smile
His unprotected youth enjoy'd;
His limbs inur'd to early toil,
His days with early hardships tried:
And, more to mark the gloomy void,
And bid him feel his misery,
Before his infant eyes would glide
Day-dreams of immortality.

Yet, not by cold neglect depress'd,
With sinewy arm he turn'd the soil,
Sunk with the evening sun to rest,
And met at morn his earliest smile.
Wak'd by his rustic pipe, meanwhile
The powers of fancy came along,
And sooth'd his lengthen'd hours of toil
With native wit and sprightly song.

—Ah! days of bliss, too swiftly fled,
When vigorous health from labour springs;
And bland contentment smooths the bed,
And sleep his ready opiate brings;
And hovering round on airy wings
Float the light forms of young desire,
That of unutterable things
The soft and shadowy hope inspire.

Now spells of mightier power prepare,
Bid brighter phantoms round him dance;
Let flattery spread her viewless snare,
And fame attract his vagrant glance:
Let sprightly pleasure too advance,
Unveil'd her eyes, unclasp'd her zone,
'Till, lost in love's delirious trance,
He scorn the joys his youth has known.

Let friendship pour her brightest blaze,
Expanding all the bloom of soul;
And mirth concentre all her rays,
And point them from the sparkling bowl;
And let the careless moments roll
In social pleasures unconfin'd,
And confidence that spurns controul
Unlock the inmost springs of mind:

And lead his steps those bowers among,
Where elegance with splendour vies,
Or science bids her favour'd throng
To more refin'd sensations rise:
Beyond the peasant's humbler joys,
And freed from each laborious strife,
There let him learn the bliss to prize
That waits the sons of polish'd life.

Then whilst his throbbing veins beat high
With every impulse of delight,
Dash from his lips the cup of joy,
And shroud the scene in shades of night;

And let despair, with wizard light,
  Disclose the yawning gulf below,
And pour incessant on his sight
  Her specter'd ills and shapes of woe:

And shew beneath a cheerless shed,
  With sorrowing heart and streaming eyes,
In silent grief where droops her head,
  The partner of his early joys;
And let his infants' tender cries
  His fond parental succour claim,
And bid him hear in agonies
  A husband's and a father's name.

'Tis done, the powerful charm succeeds·
  His high reluctant spirit bends;
In bitterness of soul he bleeds,
  Nor longer with his fate contends.
An idiot laugh the welkin rends
  As genius thus degraded lies;
'Till pitying Heaven the veil extends
  That shrouds the Poet's ardent eyes.

—Rear high thy bleak majestic hills,
  Thy shelter'd valleys proudly spread,
And, *Scotia*, pour thy thousand rills,
  And wave thy heaths with blossoms red;
But never more shall poet tread
  Thy airy heights. thy woodland reign,
Since he the sweetest bard is dead
  That ever breath'd the soothing strain.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Note A. See *p.* 2.

THE importance of the national establishment of parish schools in Scotland will justify a short account of the legislative provisions respecting it, especially as the subject has escaped the notice of all the historians.

By an act of the king (James VI.) and privy council of the 10th of December, 1616, it was recommended to the bishops to *deale and travel* with the heritors (landed proprietors) and inhabitants of the several parishes in their respective dioceses, towards the fixing upon "some certain solid and sure course," for settling and entertaining a school in each parish. This was ratified by a statute of Char. I. (the act 1633, chap. 5), which empowered the bishop, with the consent of the heritors of a parish, or of a majority of the inhabitants, if the heritors refused to attend the meeting, to assess every plough of land (that is, every farm in proportion to the number of ploughs upon it) with a certain sum for establishing a school. This was an ineffectual provision, as depending on the consent and pleasure of the heritors and inhabitants. Therefore a new order of things was introduced by *Stat.* 1646, *chap.* 17, which *obliges* the heritors and minister of each parish to meet and assess the several heritors with the requisite sum for building a school-house, and to elect a school-master, and modify a salary for him in all time to come. The salary is ordered not to be under one hundred, nor above two hundred merks, that is, in our present sterling money, not under 5l. 11s. 1.5d. nor above 11l. 2s. 3d.; and the assessment is to be laid on the land in the same proportion as it is rated for the support of the clergy, and as it regulates the payment of the land-tax. But in case the heritors of any parish, or the majority of them, should fail to discharge this duty, then the persons forming what is called the *Committee of Supply* of the county (consisting of the principal landholders), *or any five of them*, are authorized by the statute to impose the assessment instead of them, on the representation of the presbytery in which the parish is situated. To secure the choice of a proper teacher, the right of election of the heritors, by a statute passed in 1693, *chap.* 22, is made subject to the review and controul of the presbytery of the district, who have the examination of the person proposed committed to them, both as to his qualifications as a teacher, and as to his proper deportment in the office, when settled in it. The election of the heritors is therefore only a presentment of a person for the approbation of the presbytery, who, if they find him unfit, may declare his incapacity, and thus oblige them to elect anew. So far is stated on unquestionable authority*.

The legal salary of the school-master was not inconsiderable at the time it was fixed, but by the decrease in the value of money, it is now certainly inadequate to its object; and it is painful to observe that the landholders of Scotland resisted the humble application of the school-masters to the legislature for its increase, a few years ago. The number of parishes in Scotland is 877; and if we allow the salary of a school-master in each to be, on an average, seven pounds sterling, the amount of the legal provision will be 6139l. sterling. If we suppose the wages paid by the scholars to amount to twice this sum, which is probably beyond the truth, the total of the expenses among 1,526,492 persons (the whole population of Scotland), of this most important establishment, will be 18,417l. But on this, as well as on other subjects respecting Scotland, accurate information may soon be expected from Sir John Sinclair's Analysis of his Statistics, which will complete the immortal monument he has reared to his patriotism.

The benefit arising in Scotland from the instruction of the poor was soon felt, and by an act of the British parliament, 4 *Geo.* I. *chap.* 6, it is enacted, "that of the monies arising from the sale of the Scottish estates forfeited in the rebellion of 1715, 2000l. sterling shall be converted into a capital stock, the interest of which shall be laid out in erecting and maintaining schools in the Highlands. The Society for propagating Christian Knowledge, incorporated in 1709, have applied a large part of their fund for the same purpose. By their report, 1st May, 1795, the annual sum em-

* The authority of A. Frazer Tytler, and David Hume, Esqrs.

ployed by them in supporting their schools in the Highlands and Islands, was 3913l. 19s. 10d. in which are taught the English language, reading and writing, and the principles of religion. The schools of the society are additional to the legal schools, which, from the great extent of many of the Highland parishes, were found insufficient. Besides these established schools, the lower classes of people in Scotland, where the parishes are large, often combine together and establish private schools of their own, at one of which it was, that Burns received the principal part of his education. So convinced, indeed, are the poor people of Scotland, by experience, of the benefit of instruction to their children, that though they may often find it difficult to feed and clothe them, some kind of school instruction they almost always procure them.

The influence of the school-establishment of Scotland, on the peasantry of that country, seems to have decided by experience a question of legislation, of the utmost importance—whether a system of national instruction for the poor be favourable to morals and good government. In the year 1698, Fletcher of Saltoun declared as follows: "There are at this day in Scotland, two hundred thousand people begging from door to door. And though the number of them be perhaps double to what it was formerly, by reason of this present great distress (a famine then prevailed), yet in all times there have been about one hundred thousand of those vagabonds, who have lived without any regard or subjection either to the laws of the land, or even those of God and nature; fathers incestuously accompanying with their own daughters, the son with the mother, and the brother with the sister." He goes on to say, that no magistrate ever could discover that they had ever been baptized, or in what way one in a hundred went out of the world. He accuses them as frequently guilty of robbery, and sometimes of murder. "In years of plenty," says he, "many thousands of them meet together in the mountains, where they feast and riot for many days, and at country weddings, markets, *burials*, and other public occasions, they are to be seen, both men and women, perpetually drunk, cursing, blaspheming, and fighting together*." This high-minded statesman, of whom it is said by a contemporary, "that he would lose his life readily to save his country, and would not do a base thing to serve it," thought the evil so great, that he proposed as a remedy, the revival of domestic slavery, according to the practice of his adored republics in the classic ages! A better remedy has been found, which in the silent lapse of a century has proved effectual. The statute of 1696, the noble legacy of the Scottish parliament to their country, began soon after this to operate; and happily, as the minds of the poor received instruction, the union opened new channels of industry, and new fields of action to their view.

At the present day, there is perhaps no country in Europe, in which, in proportion to its population, so small a number of crimes fall under the chastisement of the criminal law, as Scotland. We have the best authority for asserting, that on an average of thirty years preceding the year 1797, the executions in that division of the island, did not amount to six annually; and one quarter sessions for the town of Manchester only, has sent, according to Mr. Hume, more felons to the plantations, than all the judges of Scotland usually do in the space of a year*. It might appear invidious to attempt a calculation of the many thousand individuals in Manchester and its vicinity, who can neither read nor write. A majority of those who suffer the punishment of death for their crimes, in every part of England, are, it is believed, in this miserable state of ignorance!

There is now a legal provision for parochial schools, or rather for a school in each of the different townships into which the country is divided, in several of the northern states of North America. They are however of recent origin there, excepting in New England, where they were established in the last century, probably about the same time as in Scotland, and by the same religious sect. In the protestant cantons of Switzerland, the peasantry have the advantage of similar schools, though established and endowed in a different manner. This is also the case in certain districts in England, particularly in the northern parts of Yorkshire and of Lancashire, and in the counties of Westmoreland and Cumberland.

A law providing for the instruction of the poor, was passed by the parliament of Ireland; but the fund was diverted from its purpose, and the measure was entirely frustrated. *Proh pudor!*

The similarity of character between the Swiss and the Scotch, and between the Scotch and the people of New England, can scarcely be overlooked. That it arises in a great measure from the similarity of their institutions for instruction, cannot be questioned. It is no doubt increased by physical causes. With a superior degree of instruction, each of these nations possesses a country that may be said to be sterile, in the neighbourhood of countries comparatively rich. Hence, emigrations and the other effects on conduct and character, which such circumstances naturally produce. This subject is in a high degree curious. The points of dissimilarity between these nations might be traced to their causes also, and the whole investigation would perhaps admit of an approach to certainty in our conclusions, to which such inquiries seldom lead. How much superior in morals, in intellect, and in happiness, the peasantry of those parts of England are, who have opportunities of instruction, to the same class in other situations, those who inquire into the subject, will speedily discover. The peasantry of Westmoreland, and of the other districts mentioned above, if their physical and moral qualities be taken together, are, in the opinion of the editor, superior to the peasantry of any part of the island.

Note B. See *p.* 2.

It has been supposed that Scotland is less populous and less improved on account of this emigration; but such conclusions are doubtful, if not

* Political Works of Andrew Fletcher, octavo, London, 1737, *p.* 144.

* Hume's Commentaries on the Laws of Scotland, *Introd. p.* 50.

wholly fallacious. The principle of population acts in no country to the full extent of its power: marriage is every where retarded beyond the period pointed out by nature, by the difficulty of supporting a family; and this obstacle is greatest in long-settled communities. The emigration of a part of a people, facilitates the marriage of the rest, by producing a relative increase in the means of subsistence. The arguments of Adam Smith for a free export of corn, are perhaps applicable with less exception to the free export of people. The more certain the vent, the greater the cultivation of the soil. The subject has been well investigated by Sir James Stewart, whose principles have been expanded and farther illustrated in a late truly philosophical *Essay on Population*. In fact, Scotland has increased in the number of its inhabitants in the last forty years, as the Statistics of Sir John Sinclair clearly prove, but not in the ratio that some had supposed. The extent of the emigration of the Scotch may be calculated with some degree of confidence from the proportionate number of the two sexes in Scotland; a point that may be established pretty exactly, by an examination of the invaluable Statistics already mentioned. If we suppose that there is an equal number of male as female natives of Scotland alive, *some where or other*, the excess by which the females exceed the males in their own country, may be considered to be equal to the number of Scotsmen living out of Scotland. But though the males born in Scotland be admitted to be as 13 to 12, and though some of the females emigrate as well as the males, this mode of calculating would probably make the number of expatriated Scotsmen, at any one time alive, greater than the truth. The unhealthy climates into which they emigrate, the hazardous services in which so many of them engage, render the mean life of those who leave Scotland (to speak in the language of calculators) not perhaps of half the value of the mean life of those who remain.

Note C. See *p. 5.*

In the punishment of this offence, the church employed formerly the arm of the civil power. During the reign of James the VIth (James the 1st of England), criminal connexion between unmarried persons was made the subject of a particular statute (*see Hume's Commentaries on the Laws of Scotland, vol.* ii. *p.* 332), which, from its rigour, was never much enforced, and which has long fallen into disuse. When, in the middle of the last century, the Puritans succeeded in the overthrow of the monarchy in both divisions of the island, fornication was a crime against which they directed their utmost zeal. It was made punishable with death in the second instance. (*See Blackstone, b.* iv. *chap.* 4. *No.* II.) Happily this sanguinary statute was swept away along with the other acts of the Commonwealth, on the restoration of Charles II. to whose temper and manners it must have been peculiarly abhorrent. And, after the Revolution, when several salutary acts, passed during the suspension of the monarchy, were re-enacted by the Scottish parliament, particularly that for the establishment of parish schools, the statute punishing fornication with death, was suffered to sleep in the grave of the stern fanatics who had given it birth.

Note D. See *p. 5.*

The legitimation of children by subsequent marriage, became the Roman law under the Christian emperors. It was the canon law of modern Europe, and has been established in Scotland from a very remote period. Thus, a child born a bastard, if his parents afterwards marry, enjoys all the privileges of seniority over his brothers afterwards born in wedlock. In the parliament of Merton, in the reign of Henry III, the English clergy made a vigorous attempt to introduce this article into the law of England, and it was on this occasion, that the barons made the noted answer, since so often appealed to: *Quod nolunt leges Angliæ mutare; quæ huc usque usitatæ sunt et approbatæ.* With regard to what constitutes a marriage, the law of Scotland, as explained *p.* 5, differs from the Roman law, which required the ceremony to be performed *in facie ecclesiæ.*

No. II.

Note A. See *p.* 11.

IT may interest some persons to peruse the first poetical production of our bard, and it is, therefore, extracted from a kind of common-place book, which he seems to have begun in his twentieth year; and which he entitled, "*Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, &c., by Robert Burness*, a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature, rational or irrational. As he was but little indebted to a scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished rustic way of life; but as, I believe, they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature, to see how a ploughman thinks and feels, under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the modes and manners of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, in all the species."

"Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil, or our pen design'd,
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of the youthful mind."
Shenstone.

This MS. book, to which our poet prefixed this account of himself, and of his intention in preparing it, contains several of his earlier poems, some as they were printed, and others in their

embryo state. The song alluded to is as follows.

Tune—'*I am a Man unmarried.*'

O once I lov'd a bonnie lass,
Ay and I love her still,
And whilst that virtue warms my breast,
I'll love my handsome Nell.
Tal lal de ral, &c.

As bonnie lasses I hae seen,
And mony full as braw,
But for a modest gracefu' mein
The like I never saw.

A bonny lass, I will confess,
Is pleasant to the e'e,
But without some better qualities
She's no a lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,
And what is best of a',
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.

She dresses ay sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
Gars ony dress look weel.

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart,
But it's innocence and modesty
That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without controul.
Tal lal de ral, &c.

It must be confessed, that these lines give no indication of the future genius of Burns; but he himself seems to have been fond of them, probably from the recollections they excited.

Note B. See *p.* 13.

At the time that our poet took the resolution of becoming *wise*, he procured a little book of blank paper, with the purpose (expressed on the first page) of making farming memorandums upon it. These farming memorandums are curious enough; many of them have been written with a pencil, and are now obliterated, or at least illegible. A considerable number are, however, legible, and a specimen may gratify the reader. It must be premised that the poet kept the book by him several years—that he wrote upon it, here and there, with the utmost irregularity, and that on the same page are notations, very distant from each other as to time and place.

* * * * * *

April, 1782.

EXTEMPORE.

O why the deuce should I repine,
And be an ill foreboder;
I'm twenty-three, and five feet nine,
I'll go and be a sodger.
I gat some gear wi' meikle care,
I held it weel thegither;
But now its gane, and something mair,
I'll go and be a sodger.

* * * * * *

FRAGMENT.

Tune—'*Donald Blue.*'

O leave novels, ye Mauchline belles,
Ye're safer at your spinning wheel;
Such witching books are baited hooks
For rakish rooks like Rob Mossgiel.
Sing tal lal lay, &c.

Your fine *Tom Jones* and *Grandisons*,
They make your youthful fancies reel,
They heat your brains, and fire your veins,
And then you're prey for Rob Mossgiel.

Beware a tongue that's smoothly hung;
A heart that warmly seems to feel;
That feeling heart but acts a part,
'Tis rakish art in Rob Mossgiel.

The frank address, the soft caress,
Are worse than poison'd darts of steel,
The frank address, and politesse,
Are all finesse in Rob Mossgiel.

* * * * * *

For he's far aboon Dunkel the night
Maun white the stick and a' that.

Mem. To get for Mr. Johnston these two songs:

'*Molly, Molly, my dear honey.*'—'*The cock and the hen, the deer in her den.*' &c.

* * * * * *

Ah Chloris! Sir Peter Halket, of Pitferran, the author. *Note.* He married her, the heiress of Pitferran.

Colonel George Crawford, the author of *Down the Burn Davy.*

Pinkey-house, by J. Mitchell.

My Apron Deary! and *Amynta*, by sir G. Elliot.

Willie was a wanton Wag, was made on Walkinshaw, of Walkinshaw, near Paisley.

I loe na a laddie but ane, Mr. Clunzee.

The bonnie wee thing,—beautiful.—*Lundie's Dream*—very beautiful.

He till't and she till't—assez bien.

Armstrong's Farewell—fine.

The author of the *Highland Queen*, was a Mr. M'Iver, purser of the Solboy.

Fife and a' the Land about it, R. Fergusson.

The author of *The Bush aboon Traquair*, was a Dr. Stewart.

Polwart on the Green, composed by captain John Drummond M'Gregor of Bochaldie.

Mem. To inquire if Mr. Cockburn was the author of, *I hae seen the smiling*, &c.

* * * *

The above may serve as a specimen. All the notes on farming are *obliterated.*

Note C. See *p.* 24.

Rules and Regulations to be observed in the Bachelors' Club.

1st. The club shall meet at Tarbolton every fourth Monday night, when a question on any subject shall be proposed, disputed points of religion only excepted, in the manner hereafter directed; which question is to be debated in the club, each member taking whatever side he thinks proper.

2d. When the club is met, the president, or, he failing, some one of the members till he come, shall take his seat; then the other members shall seat themselves, those who are for one side of the question on the president's right hand, and those who are for the other side on his left: which of them shall have the right hand is to be determined by the president. The president and four of the members being present, shall have the power to transact any ordinary part of the society's business.

3d. The club met and seated, the president shall read the question out of the club's book of records (which book is always to be kept by the president); then the two members nearest the president shall cast lots, who of them shall speak first, and, according as the lot shall determine, the member nearest the president, on that side, shall deliver his opinion, and the member nearest, on the other side, shall reply to him; then the second member of the side that spoke first, then the second member of the side that spoke second, and so on to the end of the company; but, if there be fewer members on one side than on the other, when all the members of the least side have spoken, according to their places, any of them, as they please among themselves, may reply to the remaining members of the opposite side: when both sides have spoken, the president shall give his opinion, after which, they may go over it a second or more times, and so continue the question.

4th. The club shall then proceed to the choice of a question for the subject of next night's meeting. The president shall first propose one, and any other member, who chuses, may propose more questions; and, whatever one of them is most agreeable to the majority of the members, shall be the subject of debate next club-night.

5th. The club shall lastly elect a new president for the next meeting: the president shall first name one, then any of the club may name another, and, whoever of them has the majority of votes, shall be duly elected; allowing the president the first vote and the casting vote, upon a par, but none other. Then, after a general toast to the mistresses of the club, they shall dismiss.

6th. There shall be no private conversation carried on during the time of debate, nor shall any member interrupt another while he is speaking, under the penalty of a reprimand from the president for the first fault, doubling his share of the reckoning for the second, trebling it for the third, and so on in proportion for every other fault; provided always, however, that any member may speak at any time after leave asked and given by the president. All swearing and profane language, and particularly all obscene and indecent conversation, is strictly prohibited, under the same penalty as aforesaid, in the first clause of this article.

7th. No member, on any pretence whatever, shall mention any of the club's affairs to any other person, but a brother member, under the pain of being excluded; and particularly if any member shall reveal any of the speeches or affairs of the club, with a view to ridicule or laugh at any of the rest of the members, he shall be for ever excommunicated from the society: and the rest of the members are desired, as much as possible, to avoid, and have no communication with him as a friend or comrade.

8th. Every member shall attend at the meetings, without he can give a proper excuse for not attending; and it is desired, that every one who cannot attend, will send his excuse with some other member; and he who shall be absent three meetings, without sending such excuse, shall be summoned to the next club night, when, if he fail to appear, or send an excuse, he shall be excluded.

9th. The club shall not consist of more than sixteen members, all bachelors, belonging to the parish of Tarbolton; except a brother member marry, and in that case he may be continued, if the majority of the club think proper. No person shall be admitted a member of this society without the unanimous consent of the club; and any member may withdraw from the club altogether, by giving a notice to the president, in writing, of his departure.

10th. Every man, proper for a member of this society, must have a frank, honest, open heart; above any thing dirty or mean; and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex. No haughty, self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the club, and especially no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to heap up money, shall, upon any pretence whatever, be admitted. In short, the proper person for this society, is a cheerful, honest-hearted lad; who, if he has a friend that is true, and a mistress that is kind, and as much wealth as genteelly to make both ends meet—is just as happy as this world can make him.

Note D. See *p.* 68.

A great number of manuscript poems were found among the papers of Burns, addressed to him by admirers of his genius, from different parts of Britain, as well as from Ireland and America. Among these, was a poetical epistle from Mr. Telford, of Shrewsbury, of superior merit. It is written in the dialect of Scotland (of which country Mr. Telford is a native), and in the versification generally employed by our poet himself. Its object is to recommend to him other subjects of a serious nature, similar to that of the *Cotter's Saturday Night;* and the reader will find that the advice is happily enforced by example. It would have given the editor pleasure to have inserted the whole of this poem, which he hopes will one day see the light: he is happy to have obtained, in the mean time, his friend Mr. Telford's permission to insert the following extracts.

* * * * * * *

Pursue, O Burns! thy happy style,
" Those manner-painting strains," that, while
They bear me northward mony a mile,
Recall the days,
When tender joys, with pleasing smile,
Blest my young ways.

I see my fond companions rise,
I join the happy village joys,
I see our green hills touch the skies,
And thro' the woods
I hear the river's rushing noise,
Its roaring floods*.

No distant Swiss with warmer glow,
E'er heard his native music flow,
Nor could his wishes stronger grow,
Than still have mine,
When up this ancient mount† I go,
With songs of thine.

O happy bard! thy gen'rous flame
Was given to raise thy country's fame,
For this thy charming numbers came,
Thy matchless lays;
Then sing, and save her virtuous name,
To latest days.

* * * * * * *

But mony a theme awaits thy muse,
Fine as thy Cotter's sacred views;
Then in such verse thy soul infuse,
With holy air,
And sing the course the pious chuse,
With all thy care.

How, with religious awe imprest,
They open lay the guileless breast,
And youth and age with fears distrest,
All due prepare,
The symbols of eternal rest
Devout to share*.

How down ilk lang withdrawing hill,
Successive crowds the valleys fill,
While pure religious converse still
Beguiles the way,
And gives a cast to youthful will,
To suit the day.

How plac'd along the sacred board,
Their hoary pastor's looks ador'd,
His voice with peace and blessings stor'd,
Sent from above,
And faith, and hope, and joy afford,
And boundless love.

O'er this, with warm seraphic glow,
Celestial beings pleased bow,
And, whisper'd, hear the holy vow,
'Mid grateful tears;
And mark amid' such scenes below,
Their future peers.

* * * * * * *

O mark the awful, solemn scene†!
When hoary winter clothes the plain,
Along the snowy hills is seen
Approaching slow,
In mourning weeds, the village train,
In silent woe.

Some much-respected brother's bier,
(By turns in pious task they share,)
With heavy hearts they forward bear
Along the path;
Where nei'bours saw, in dusky air‡,
The light of death.

And when they pass the rocky how,
Where binwood bushes o'er them flow,
And move around the rising knowe,
Where far away
The kirk-yard trees are seen to grow,
By th' water brae.

Assembled round the narrow grave,
While o'er them wint'ry tempests rave,
In the cold wind their grey locks wave,
As low they lay
Their brother's body 'mongst the lave
Of parent clay.

---

* The banks of the *Esk*, in Dumfriesshire, are here alluded to. E.

† A beautiful little mount, which stands immediately before, or rather forms a part of Shrewsbury castle, a seat of sir William Pulteney, bart.

* The sacrament, generally administered in the country parishes of Scotland in the open air.

† A Scottish funeral. E.

‡ This alludes to a superstition prevalent in Eskdale and Annandale, that a light precedes in the night every funeral, marking the precise path it is to pass. E.

Expressive looks from each declare
The griefs within their bosoms bear,
One holy bow devout they share,
Then home return,
And think o'er all the virtues fair
Of him they mourn.

* * * * * * *

Say how, by early lessons taught,
(Truth's pleasing air is willing caught,)
Congenial to th' untainted thought,
The shepherd boy,
Who tends his flocks on lonely height,
Feels holy joy.

Is aught on earth so lovely known,
On sabbath morn and far alone,
His guileless soul all naked shown
Before his God—
Such pray'rs must welcome reach the throne,
And blest abode.

O tell! with what a heartfelt joy
The parent eyes the virtuous boy;
And all his constant kind employ,
Is how to give
The best of lear he can enjoy,
As means to live.

The parish school, its curious site,
The master who can clear indite,
And lead him on to count and write,
Demand thy care;
Nor pass the ploughman's school at night
Without a share.

Nor yet the tenty curious lad,
Who o'er the ingle hings his head,
And begs of nei'bours books to read;
For hence arise
Thy country's sons, who far are spread,
Baith bauld and wise.

* * * * * * *

The bonnie lasses, as they spin,
Perhaps with Allan's sangs begin,
How Tay and Tweed smooth flowing rin
Thro' flowery hows;
Where shepherd lads their sweethearts win
With earnest vows.

Or may be, Burns, thy thrilling page
May a' their virtuous thoughts engage,
While playful youth and placid age
In concert join,
To bliss the bard, who, gay or sage,
Improves the mind.

* * * * * * *

Long may their harmless, simple ways
Nature's own pure emotions raise;
May still the dear romantic blaze
Of purest love,
Their bosoms warm to latest days,
And aye improve.

May still each fond attachment glow,
O'er woods, o'er streams, o'er hills of snow;
May rugged rocks still dearer grow,
And may their souls
Even love the warlock glens, which through
The tempest howls.

To eternize such themes as these,
And all their happy manners seize,
Will every virtuous bosom please,
And high in fame
To future times will justly raise
Thy patriot name.

While all the venal tribes decay,
That bask in flatt'ry's flaunting ray,
The noisome vermin of a day,
Thy works shall gain
O'er every mind a boundless sway,
And lasting reign.

When winter binds the harden'd plains,
Around each hearth, the hoary swains
Shall teach the rising youth thy strains,
And anxious say,
Our blessing with our sons remain,
And *Burns's lay!*

No. III.

(First inserted in the second edition.)

THE editor has particular pleasure in presenting to the public the following letter, to the due understanding of which, a few previous observations are necessary.

The biographer of Burns was naturally desirous of hearing the opinion of the friend and brother of the poet, on the manner in which he had executed his task, before a second edition should be committed to the press. He had the satisfaction of receiving this opinion, in a letter dated the 24th of August, approving of the life in very obliging terms, and offering one or two trivial corrections, as to names and dates chiefly, which are made in this edition. One or two observations were offered of a different kind. In the 319th page of the first volume, first edition, a quotation is made from the pastoral song, *Etrick Banks*, and an explanation given of the phrase "mony feck" which occurs in this quotation. Supposing the sense to be complete after "mony," the editor had considered "feck" as a rustic oath, which confirmed the assertion. The words were, therefore, separated by a comma. Mr. Burns considered this as an error. "Feck," he presumes, is the Scottish word for quantity, and "mony feck" to mean simply, very many. The editor, in yielding to this authority, expressed some hesitation, and hinted that the phrase "mony feck," was, in Mr. Burns' sense, a pleonasm or barbarism, which deformed this beautiful

song*. His reply to this observation, makes the first clause of the following letter.

In the same communication, he informed me that the *Mirror* and the *Lounger* were proposed by him to the Conversation Club of Mauchline, and that he had thoughts of giving me his sentiments on the remarks I had made respecting the fitness of such works for such societies. The observations of such a man, on such a subject, the editor conceived, would be received with particular interest by the public, and having pressed earnestly for them, they will be found in the following letter. Of the value of this communication, delicacy towards his very respectable correspondent prevents him from expressing his opinion. The original letter is in the hands of Messrs. Cadell and Davies.

Dinning, Dumfriesshire, 24th Oct. 1800.

Dear sir,

Yours of the 17th inst. came to my hand yesterday, and I sit down this afternoon to write you in return; but when I shall be able to finish all I wish to say to you, I cannot tell. I am sorry your conviction is not complete respecting *feck*. There is no doubt, that, if you take two English words, which appear synonymous to *mony feck*, and judge by the rules of English construction, it will appear a barbarism. I believe, if you take this mode of translating from any language, the effect will frequently be the same. But, if you take the expression *mony feck* to have, as I have stated it, the same meaning with the English expression very many (and such licence every translator must be allowed, especially when he translates from a simple dialect, which has never been subjected to rule, and where the precise meaning of words is of consequence not minutely attended to), it will be well enough. One thing I am certain of, that ours is the sense universally understood in this country; and, I believe, no Scotsman who has lived contented at home, pleased with the simple manners, the simple melodies, and the simple dialect of his native country, unvitiated by foreign intercourse, "whose soul proud science never taught to stray," ever discovered barbarism in the song of Etrick Banks.

The story you have heard of the gable of my father's house falling down, is simply as follows†: When my father built his "clay biggin," he put in two stone jambs, as they are called, and a lintel, carrying up a chimney in his clay gable. The consequence was, that, as the gable subsided, the jambs, remaining firm, threw it off its centre; and, one very stormy morning, when my brother was nine or ten days old, a little before day-light, a part of the gable fell out, and the rest appeared so shattered, that my mother, with the young poet, had to be carried through the storm to a neighbour's house, where they remained a week, till their own dwelling was adjusted. That you may not think too meanly of this house, or of my father's taste in building, by supposing the poet's description in the Vision (which is entirely a fancy picture) applicable to it, allow me to take notice to you, that the house consisted of a kitchen in one end, and a room in the other, with a fireplace and chimney; that my father had constructed a concealed bed in the kitchen, with a small closet at the end, of the same materials with the house, and when altogether east over, outside and in, with lime, it had a neat, comfortable appearance, such as no family of the same rank, in the present improved style of living, would think themselves ill lodged in. I wish, likewise, to take notice in passing, that, although the "Cotter," in the Saturday Night, is an exact copy of my father in his manners, his family devotion, and exhortations, yet, the other parts of the description do not apply to our family. None of us were ever "At service out amang the neebors roun." Instead of our depositing our "fair won penny fee" with our parents, my father laboured hard, and lived with the most rigid economy, that he might be able to keep his children at home, thereby having an opportunity of watching the progress of our young minds, and forming in them early habits of piety and virtue; and from this motive alone, did he engage in farming, the source of all his difficulties and distresses.

When I threatened you in my last with a long letter on the subject of the books I recommended to the Mauchline club, and the effects of refinement of taste on the labouring classes of men, I meant merely that I wished to write you on that subject, with the view that, in some future communication to the public, you might take up the subject more at large, that, by means of your happy manner of writing, the attention of people of power and influence might be fixed on it. I had little expectation, however, that I should overcome my indolence and the difficulty of arranging my thoughts so far as to put my threat in execution, till some time ago, before I had finished my harvest, having a call from Mr. Ewart* with a message from you, pressing me to the performance of this task, I thought myself no longer at liberty to decline it, and resolved to set about it with my first leisure. I will now, therefore, endeavour to lay before you what has occurred to my mind on a subject where people, capable of observation, and of placing their remarks in a proper point of view, have seldom an opportunity of making their remarks on real life. In doing this, I may perhaps be led sometimes to write more in the manner of a person communicating information to you, which you did not know before, and at other times more in the style of egotism, than I would choose to do to any person in whose candour, and even personal good will, I had less confidence.

* The correction made by Gilbert Burns, has also been suggested by a writer in the Monthly Magazine, under the signature of *Alboin*, who, for taking this trouble, and for mentioning the author of the poem of Donocht-head, deserves the editor's thanks.

† The editor had heard a report, that the poet was born in the midst of a storm, which blew down a part of the house. E.

* The editor's friend, Mr. Peter Ewart, of Manchester. E.

There are two several lines of study that open to every man as he enters life: the one, the general science of life, of duty, and of happiness; the other, the particular arts of his employment or situation in society, and the several branches of knowledge therewith connected. This last is certainly indispensable, as nothing can be more disgraceful than ignorance in the way of one's own profession; and, whatever a man's speculative knowledge may be, if he is ill informed there, he can neither be a useful, nor a respectable member of society. It is nevertheless true, that "The proper study of mankind is man;" to consider what duties are incumbent on him as a rational creature, and a member of society; how he may increase or secure his happiness; and how he may prevent or soften the many miseries incident to human life. I think the pursuit of happiness is too frequently confined to the endeavour after the acquisition of wealth. I do not wish to be considered as an idle declaimer against riches, which, after all that can be said against them, will still be considered, by men of common sense, as objects of importance; and poverty will be felt as a sore evil, after all the fine things that can be said of its advantages; on the contrary I am of opinion, that a great proportion of the miseries of life arise from the want of economy, and a prudent attention to money, or the ill-directed or intemperate pursuit of it. But, however valuable riches may be as the means of comfort, independence, and the pleasure of doing good to others, yet, I am of opinion that they may be, and frequently are, purchased at too great a cost, and that sacrifices are made in the pursuit, which the acquisition cannot compensate. I remember hearing my worthy teacher, Mr. Murdoch, relate an anecdote to my father, which I think sets this matter in a strong light, and perhaps was the origin, or at least tended to promote, this way of thinking in me. When Mr. Murdoch left Alloway, he went to teach and reside in the family of an opulent farmer, who had a number of sons. A neighbour, coming on a visit, in the course of conversation asked the father how he meant to dispose of his sons. The father replied that he had not determined. The visitor said, that, were he in his place, he would give them all good education and send them abroad (without perhaps having a precise idea where). The father objected, that many young men lost their health in foreign countries, and many their lives. True, replied the visitor, but as you have a number of sons, it will be strange if some one of them does not live and make a fortune.

Let any person who has the feelings of a father comment on this story: but, though few will avow, even to themselves, that such views govern their conduct, yet do we not daily see people shipping off their sons (and who would do so by their daughters also, if there were any demand for them), that they may be rich or perish?

The education of the lower classes is seldom considered in any other point of view, than as the means of raising them from that station to which they were born, and of making a fortune. I am ignorant of the mysteries of the art of acquiring fortune without any thing to begin with, and cannot calculate, with any degree of exactness, the difficulties to be surmounted, the mortifications to be suffered, and the degradation of character to be submitted to, in lending one's self to be the minister of other people's vices, or in the practice of rapine, fraud, oppression, or dissimulation, in the progress; but even when the wished-for end is attained, it may be questioned whether happiness be much increased by the change. When I have seen a fortunate adventurer of the lower ranks of life returned from the East or West Indies, with all the hauteur of a vulgar mind, accustomed to be served by slaves, assuming a character, which, from the early habits of his life, he is ill fitted to support; displaying magnificence which raises the envy of some and the contempt of others; claiming an equality with the great, which they are unwilling to allow; inly pining at the precedence of the hereditary gentry; maddened by the polished insolence of some of the unworthy part of them; seeking pleasure in the society of men who can condescend to flatter him, and listen to his absurdity for the sake of a good dinner and good wine; I cannot avoid concluding, that his brother, or companion, who, by a diligent application to the labours of agriculture, or some useful mechanic employment, and the careful husbanding of his gains, has acquired a competence in his station, is a much happier, and, in the eye of a person who can take an enlarged view of mankind, a much more respectable man.

But, the votaries of wealth may be considered as a great number of candidates striving for a few prizes, and, whatever addition the successful may make to their pleasure or happiness, the disappointed will always have more to suffer, I am afraid, than those who abide contented in the station to which they were born. I wish, therefore, the education of the lower classes to be promoted and directed to their improvement as men, as the means of increasing their virtue, and opening to them new and dignified sources of pleasure and happiness. I have heard some people object to the education of the lower classes of men, as rendering them less useful by abstracting them from their proper business; others, as tending to make them saucy to their superiors, impatient of their condition, and turbulent subjects; while you, with more humanity, have your fears alarmed, lest the delicacy of mind, induced by that sort of education and reading I recommend, should render the evils of their situation insupportable to them. I wish to examine the validity of each of these objections, beginning with the one you have mentioned.

I do not mean to controvert your criticism of my favourite books, the Mirror and Lounger, although I understand there are people who think themselves judges, who do not agree with you. The acquisition of knowledge, except what is connected with human life and conduct, or the particular business of his employment, does not appear to me to be the fittest pursuit for a peasant. I would say with the poet,

" How empty learning, and how vain is art,
Save where it guides the life, or mends the heart!"

There seems to be a considerable latitude in the use of the word taste. I understand it to be the perception and relish of beauty, order, or any other thing, the contemplation of which gives pleasure and delight to the mind. I suppose it is in this sense you wish it to be understood. If I am right, the taste which these books are calculated to cultivate (beside the taste for fine writing, which many of the papers tend to improve and to gratify), is, what is proper, consistent, and becoming in human character and conduct, as almost every paper relates to these subjects.

I am sorry I have not these books by me, that I might point out some instances. I remember two; one, the beautiful story of La Roche, where, beside the pleasure one derives from a beautiful simple story told in M'Kenzie's happiest manner, the mind is led to taste, with heart-felt rapture, the consolation to be derived, in deep affliction, from habitual devotion and trust in Almighty God. The other, the story of general W——, where the reader is led to have a high relish for that firmness of mind which disregards appearances, the common forms and vanities of life, for the sake of doing justice in a case which was out of the reach of human laws.

Allow me then to remark, that, if the morality of these books is subordinate to the cultivation of taste; that taste, that refinement of mind and delicacy of sentiment, which they are intended to give, are the strongest guard and surest foundation of morality and virtue. Other moralists guard, as it were, the overt act; these papers, by exalting duty into sentiment, are calculated to make every deviation from rectitude and propriety of conduct, painful to the mind,

" Whose temper'd powers
Refine at length, and every passion wears
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien."

I readily grant you that the refinement of mind which I contend for, increases our sensibility to the evils of life; but what station of life is without its evils? There seems to be no such thing as perfect happiness in this world; and we must balance the pleasure and the pain which we derive from taste, before we can properly appreciate it in the case before us. I apprehend that on a minute examination it will appear, that the evils peculiar to the lower ranks of life, derive their power to wound us more from the suggestions of false pride, and the " contagion of luxury weak and vile," than the refinement of our taste. It was a favourite remark of my brother's, that there was no part of the constitution of our nature, to which we were more indebted, than that by which " *custom makes things familiar and easy*" (a copy Mr. Murdoch used to set us to write), and there is little labour which custom will not make easy to a man in health, if he is not ashamed of his employment, or does not begin to compare his situation with those he may see going about at their ease.

But the man of enlarged mind feels the respect due to him as a man; he has learned that no employment is dishonourable in itself; that while he performs aright the duties of that station, in which God has placed him, he is as great as a king in the eyes of Him whom he is principally desirous to please; for the man of taste, who is constantly obliged to labour, must of necessity be religious. If you teach him only to reason, you may make him an atheist, a demagogue, or any vile thing; but, if you teach him to feel, his feelings can only find their proper and natural relief in devotion and religious resignation. He knows that those people who are to appearance at ease, are not without their share of evils, and that even toil itself is not destitute of advantages. He listens to the words of his favourite poet:

" O mortal man, that livest here by toil,
Cease to repine and grudge thy hard estate;
That, like an emmet, thou must ever moil,
Is a sad sentence of an ancient date;
And certes there is for it reason great,
Although sometimes it makes thee weep and wail,
And curse thy stars, and early drudge and late;
Withouten that would come an heavier bale,
Loose life, unruly passions, and diseases pale!"

And, while he repeats the words, the grateful recollection comes across his mind, how often he has derived ineffable pleasure from the sweet song of " Nature's darling child." I can say, from my own experience, that there is no sort of farm labour inconsistent with the most refined and pleasurable state of the mind that I am acquainted with, thrashing alone excepted. That, indeed, I have always considered as insupportable drudgery; and think the ingenious mechanic who invented the thrashing machine, ought to have a statue among the benefactors of his country, and should be placed in the niche next to the person who introduced the culture of potatoes into this island.

Perhaps the thing of most importance in the education of the common people, is, to prevent the intrusion of artificial wants. I bless the memory of my worthy father for almost every thing in the dispositions of my mind, and my habits of life, which I can approve of; and for none more than the pains he took to impress my mind with the sentiment, that nothing was more unworthy the character of a man, than that his happiness should in the least depend on what he should eat or drink. So early did he impress my mind with this, that, although I was as fond of sweetmeats as children generally are, yet I seldom laid out any of the halfpence which relations or neighbours gave me, at fairs, in the purchase of them; and if I did, every mouthful I swallowed was accompanied with shame and remorse; and, to this hour, I never indulge in the use of any delicacy, but I feel a considerable degree of self-reproach and alarm for the degradation of the human character.

Such a habit of thinking I consider as of great consequence, both to the virtue and happiness of men in the lower ranks of life. And thus, sir, I am of opinion, that if their minds are early and deeply imprest with a sense of the dignity of man, as such; with the love of independence and industry, economy and temperance, as the most obvious means of making themselves independent, and the virtues most becoming their situation, and necessary to their happiness; men in the lower ranks of life may partake of the pleasures to be derived from the perusal of books calculated to improve the mind and refine the taste, without any danger of becoming more unhappy in their situation, or discontented with it. Nor do I think there is any danger of their becoming less useful. There are some hours every day, that the most constant labourer is neither at work nor asleep. These hours are either appropriated to amusement or to sloth. If a taste for employing these hours in reading were cultivated, I do not suppose that the return to labour would be more difficult. Every one will allow that the attachment to idle amusements, or even to sloth, has as powerful a tendency to abstract men from their proper business, as the attachment to books; while the one dissipates the mind, and the other tends to increase its powers of self-government. To those who are afraid that the improvement of the minds of the common people might be dangerous to the state, or the established order of society, I would remark, that turbulence and commotion are certainly very inimical to the feelings of a refined mind. Let the matter be brought to the test of experience and observation. Of what description of people are mobs and insurrections composed? Are they not universally owing to the want of enlargement and improvement of mind among the common people? Nay, let any one recollect the characters of those who formed the calmer and more deliberate associations, which lately gave so much alarm to the government of this country. I suppose few of the common people who were to be found in such societies, had the education and turn of mind I have been endeavouring to recommend. Allow me to suggest one reason for endeavouring to enlighten the minds of the common people. Their morals have hitherto been guarded by a sort of dim religious awe, which, from a variety of causes, seems wearing off. I think the alteration in this respect considerable, in the short period of my observation. I have already given my opinion of the effects of refinement of mind on morals and virtue. Whenever vulgar minds begin to shake off the dogmas of the religion in which they have been educated, the progress is quick and immediate to downright infidelity; and nothing but refinement of mind can enable them to distinguish between the pure essence of of religion, and the gross systems which men have been perpetually connecting it with. In addition to what has already been done for the education of the common people of this country, in the establishment of parish schools, I wish to see the salaries augmented in some proportion to the present expense of living, and the earnings of people of similar rank, endowments, and usefulness in society; and I hope that the liberality of the present age will no longer be disgraced by refusing, to so useful a class of men, such encouragement as may make parish schools worth the attention of men fitted for the important duties of that office. In filling up the vacancies, I would have more attention paid to the candidate's capacity of reading the English language with grace and propriety; to his understanding thoroughly, and having a high relish for the beauties of English authors, both in poetry and prose; to that good sense and knowledge of human nature, which would enable him to acquire some influence on the minds and affections of his scholars; to the general worth of his character, and the love of his kind and his country, than to his proficiency in the knowledge of Latin and Greek. I would then have a sort of high English class established, not only for the purpose of teaching the pupils to read in that graceful and agreeable manner that might make them fond of reading, but to make them understand what they read, and discover the beauties of the author in composition and sentiment. I would have established in every parish a small circulating library, consisting of the books which the young people had read extracts from, in the collections they had read at school, and any other books well calculated to refine the mind, improve the moral feelings, recommend the practice of virtue, and communicate such knowledge as might be useful or suitable to the labouring classes of men. I would have the schoolmaster act as librarian, and, in recommending books to his young friends, formerly his pupils, and letting in the light of them upon their young minds, he should have the assistance of the minister. If once such education were become general, the low delights of the public-house, and other scenes of riot and depravity, would be contemned and neglected, while industry, order, cleanliness, and every virtue, which taste and independence of mind could recommend, would prevail and flourish. Thus, possessed of a virtuous and enlightened populace, with high delight I should consider my native country as at the head of all the nations of the earth, ancient or modern.

Thus, sir, have I executed my threat to the fullest extent, in regard to the length of my letter. If I had not presumed on doing it more to my liking, I should not have undertaken it; but I have not time to attempt it anew; or, if I would, am I certain that I should succeed any better? I have learned to have less confidence in my capacity of writing on such subjects.

I am much obliged by your kind inquiries about my situation and prospects. I am much pleased with the soil of this farm, and with the terms on which I possess it. I receive great encouragement likewise in building, inclosing, and other conveniences, from my landlord, Mr. G. S. Monteith, whose general character and conduct, as a landlord and country gentleman, I am highly pleased with. But the land is in such a state, as to require a considerable immediate outlay of money in the purchase of manure, the grubbing of

brush-wood, removing of stones, &c., which twelve years struggle with a farm of a cold ungrateful soil, has but ill prepared me for. If I can get these things done, however, to my mind, I think there is next to a certainty, that, in five or six years, I shall be in a hopeful way of attaining a situation, which I think as eligible for happiness, as any one I know; for I have always been of opinion, that if a man, bred to the habits of a farming life, who possesses a farm of good soil, on such terms as enables him easily to pay all demands, is not happy, he ought to look somewhere else, than to his situation, for the causes of his uneasiness.

I beg you will present my most respectful compliments to Mrs. Currie, and remember me to Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe, and Mr. Roscoe, jun., whose kind attentions to me, when in Liverpool, I shall never forget.

I am, dear sir. your most obedient, and much obliged humble servant,

GILBERT BURNS.

To James Currie, M. D. F. R. S.
Liverpool.

CORRESPONDENCE

WITH

Mr. GEORGE THOMSON;

INCLUDING

POETRY,

HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED OR UNCOLLECTED.

THE following pages contain the Correspondence between Mr. Burns and Mr. Thomson, on the subject of the beautiful work projected and executed by the latter, the nature of which is explained in the first number of the following series*. The undertaking of Mr. Thomson, is one on which the public may be congratulated in various points of view; not merely as having collected the finest of the Scottish songs and airs of past times, but as having given occasion to a number of original songs of our bard, which equal or surpass the former efforts of the pastoral muses of Scotland, and which, if we mistake not, may be safely compared with the lyric poetry of any age or country. The letters of Mr. Burns to Mr. Thomson include the songs he presented to him, some of which appear in different stages of their progress, and these letters will be found to exhibit occasionally his notions of song writing, and his opinions on various subjects of taste and criticism. These opinions, it will be observed, were called forth by the observations of his correspondent, Mr. Thomson; and without the letters of this gentleman, those of Burns would have been often unintelligible. He has, therefore, yielded to the earnest request of the trustees of the family of the poet, to suffer them to appear in their natural order; and, independently of the illustration they give to the letters of our bard, it is not to be doubted that their intrinsic merit will ensure them a reception from the public, far beyond what Mr. Thomson's modesty would permit him to suppose. The whole of this correspondence was arranged for the press by Mr. Thomson, and has been printed with little addition or variation.

* This work is entitled, "*A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the voice; to which are added, introductory and concluding Symphonies and Accompaniments for the Piano Forte and Violin, by Pleyel and Kozeluch. With select and characteristic Verses, by the most admired Scottish Poets, &c.*—London, printed and sold by Preston, No. 97, Strand."

CORRESPONDENCE, &c.

No. I.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Sir, *Edinburgh, September*, 1792.

FOR some years past, I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favourite of our national melodies for publication. We have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts, both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so in many instances, is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses; and hence, some charming melodies are united to mere nonsense and doggrel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate, as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach, would be an easy task to the author of *The Cotter's Saturday Night*; and, for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen. If so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection, infinitely more interesting than any that has yet appeared, and acceptable to all persons of taste, whether they wish for correct melodies, delicate accompaniments, or characteristic verses.—We will esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any reasonable price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication. Tell me frankly then, whether you will devote your leisure to writing twenty or twenty-five songs, suited to the particular melodies which I am prepared to send you. A few songs, exceptionable only in some of their verses, I will likewise submit to your consideration; leaving it to you, either to mend these, or make new songs in their stead. It is superfluous to assure you, that I have no intention to displace any of the sterling old songs; those only will be removed, which appear quite silly, or absolutely indecent. Even these shall all be examined by Mr. Burns, and if *he* is of opinion that any of them are deserving of the music, in such cases, no divorce shall take place.

Relying on the letter accompanying this, to be forgiven, for the liberty I have taken in addressing you, I am, with great esteem, sir, your most obedient humble servant,

G. THOMSON.

No. II.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

Sir, *Dumfries*, 16*th Sept.* 1792.

I have just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me, will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: "Deil tak the hindmost" is by no means the *cri de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia, and, since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs, with the first line of the printed verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me. You know 'tis in the way of my trade; still leaving you, gentlemen, the undoubted right of publishers, to approve, or reject, at your pleasure, for your own publication. Apropos, if you are for *English* verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. *Tweedside; Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate; Ah! Chloris, could I now but sit*, &c. you cannot mend: but such insipid stuff as, *To Fanny fair could I impart*, &c. usually set to *The Mill Mill O*, is a disgrace to the collections, in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But more of this, in the farther prosecution of the business,

if I am called on for my strictures and amendments—I say, amendments; for I will not alter except where I myself at least, think that I amend.

As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c. would be downright *prostitution of soul!* A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favour. In the rustic phrase of the season, "Gude speed the wark!"

I am, sir, your very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

P. S. I have some particular reasons for wishing my interference to be known as little as possible.

No. III.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Dear sir, *Edinburgh, 13th Oct.* 1792.

I received with much satisfaction your pleasant and obliging letter, and I return my warmest acknowledgments for the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now no doubt of being able to produce a collection, highly deserving of public attention, in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking *English* verses, that have merit, very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year, more and more, the language of Scotland; but, if you mean that no English verses, except those of Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect, to make room for English verses; but, if we can select a few excellent ones, suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism, to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air *My Nanie O*, which in the collections is joined to the poorest stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning, *While some for pleasure pawn their health*, answers so finely to Dr. Percy's beautiful song, *O Nancy wilt thou go with me*, that one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses: you shall freely be allowed a sprinkling of your native tongue, as you elegantly express it; and, moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that, however gay and sportive the muse may be, she may always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy, which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits: simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature; but, in some of our songs, the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity; although, between the one and the other, as Dr. Beattie well observes, there is as great a difference, as between a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags. The humorous ballad, or pathetic complaint, is best suited to our artless melodies; and more interesting indeed in all songs, than the most pointed wit, dazzling descriptions, and flowery fancies.

With these trite observations, I send you eleven of the songs, for which it is my wish to substitute others of your writing. I shall soon transmit the rest, and, at the same time, a prospectus of the whole collection: and you may believe, we will receive any hints that you are so kind as to give for improving the work, with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness.

I remain, dear sir, &c.

No. IV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

My dear sir,

Let me tell you, that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just; the songs you specify in your list have *all but one* the faults you remark in them; but who shall mend the matter? Who shall rise up and say—Go to, I will make a better? For instance, on reading over *The Lea-rig*, I immediately set about trying my hand on it, and, after all, I could make nothing more of it than the following, which Heaven knows is poor enough.

When o'er the hill the eastern star
Tells bughtin-time is near, my jo;
And owsen frae the furrow'd field
Return sae dowf and weary O;
Down by the burn, where scented birks*
Wi' dew are hanging clear, my jo,
I'll meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O.

In mirkest glen, at midnight hour,
I'd rove, and ne'er be eerie O,
If through that glen I gaed to thee,
My ain kind dearie O.
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wild†,
And I were ne'er sae wearie O,

* For "scented birks," in some copies, "birken buds." E.

† In the copy transmitted to Mr. Thomson, instead of *wild*, was inserted *wet*. But in one of the manuscripts, probably written afterwards, wet was changed into wild; evidently a great improvement. The lovers might meet on the lea-rig, "although the night were ne'er so *wild*," that is, although the summer-wind blew, the sky loured, and the thunder murmured: such circumstances might render their meeting still more interesting. But if the night were actually wet, why should they meet on the lea-rig? On a wet night, the imagination cannot contemplate their situation there with any complacency.—Tibullus, and after him Hammond, has conceived a happier situation for lovers on a wet night. Probably Burns had in his mind, the verse of an old Scottish song, in which *wet* and *weary* are naturally enough conjoined:

I'd meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie O.

Your observation as to the aptitude of Dr. Percy's ballad to the air, *Nanie O*, is just. It is besides, perhaps, the most beautiful ballad in the English language. But let me remark to you, that in the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs, there is a pastoral simplicity, a something, that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay, peculiarly, apposite. For this reason, and, upon my honour, for this reason alone, I am of opinion (but, as I told you before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to approve, or reject, as you please) that my ballad of *Nanie O* might perhaps do for one set of verses to the tune. Now don't let it enter into your head, that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of authorship; and have nothing to be pleased or offended at, in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Though you should reject one half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting the other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my *Nanie O*, the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it,

"Behind yon hills where *Lugar* flows."

Girvan is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, but Lugar is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

I will soon give you a great many more remarks on this business; but I have just now an opportunity of conveying you this scrawl, free of postage, an expense that it is ill able to pay: so, with my best compliments to honest Allan, Good be wi' ye, &c.

Friday night.

. . . . . .

Saturday morning.

As I find I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away, I will give you *Nanie O* at length.

Your remarks on *Ewe-bughts*, *Marion*, are just; still it has obtained a place among our more classical Scottish songs; and what with many beauties in its composition, and more prejudices in its favour, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling, and has nothing of the merits of *Ewe-bughts;* but it will fill up this page. You must know, that all my earlier love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion, and though it might have been easy in after-times to have given them a polish, yet that polish, to me, whose they were, and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of my heart, which was so faithfully inscribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their *race*.

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic's roar?

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine:
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me,
When I forget my vow!

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily-white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join,
And curst be the cause that shall part us,
The hour, and the moment o' time*!

Galla Water, and *Auld Rob Morris*, I think, will most probably be the next subject of my musings. However, even on *my verses*, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is, not to stand aloof, the uncomplying bigot of *opiniâtreté*, but cordially to join issue with you, in the furtherance of the work.

No. V.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

November 8th, 1792.

If you mean, my dear sir, that all the songs in your collection, shall be poetry of the first merit, I am afraid you will find more difficulty in the undertaking, than you are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the *feature-notes* of the tune, that cramp the poet, and lay him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air, *My wife's a wanton wee thing*, if a few lines smooth and pretty can be adapted to it, it is all you can expect. The following were made extempore to it; and though, on farther study, I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this random clink.

"When my ploughman comes hame at ev'n,
He's often wet and weary;
Cast off the wet, put on the dry,
And gae to bed, my deary." E.

* This song Mr. Thomson has not adopted in his collection. It deserves however to be preserved. F.

MY WIFE'S A WINSOME WEE THING.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

I never saw a fairer,
I never loe'd a dearer,
And neist my heart I'll wear her,
For fear my jewel tine.

She is a winsome wee thing,
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

The warld's wrack we share o't,
The warstle and the care o't;
Wi' her I'll blythly bear it,
And think my lot divine.

. . . . . .

I have just been looking over the *Collier's bonny Dochter*; and, if the following rhapsody, which I composed the other day, on a charming Ayrshire girl, Miss ——, as she passed through this place to England, will suit your taste better than the *Collier Lassie*, fall on and welcome.

O saw ye bonnie Lesley
As she gaed o'er the border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther.

To see her, is to love her,
And love but her for ever;
For Nature made her what she is,
And ne'er made sic anither!

Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee:
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The Deil he could na scaith thee,
Or aught that wad belang thee;
He'd look into thy bonnie face,
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

The powers aboon will tent thee;
Misfortune sha'na steer thee;
Thou'rt like themselves sae lovely,
That ill they'll ne'er let near thee.

Return again, fair Lesley,
Return to Caledonie!
That we may brag, we hae a lass
There's nane again sae bonnie.

. . . . . .

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, more pathetic airs, until more leisure, as they will take, and deserve, a greater effort. However, they are all put into your hands, as clay into the hands of the potter, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. Farewell, &c.

No. VI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

HIGHLAND MARY.

Tune—"*Katharine Ogie.*"

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfald her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay, green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder;
But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
And clos'd for aye, the sparkling glance,
That dwalt on me sae kindly!
And mouldering now in silent dust,
That heart that loe'd me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

. . . . . .

My dear sir, 14*th November*, 1792.

I agree with you that the song, *Katharine Ogie*, is very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether unworthy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it; but the awkward sound *Ogie*, recurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing sentiment into the piece. The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner; you will see, at first glance, that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; and, I own that I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air, which would insure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart, that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of *Auld Rob Mor-*

ris. I have adopted the two first verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan, which promises pretty well. I take up one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bonnet-lug; and do you, *sans ceremonie*, make what use you choose of the productions. Adieu! &c.

No. VII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Dear sir, *Edinburgh, Nov.* 1792.

I was just going to write to you, that on meeting with your *Nanie* I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you, therefore, for sending the charming rustic to me, in the dress you wish her to appear before the public. She does you great credit, and will soon be admitted into the best company.

I regret that your song for the *Lea-rig* is so short; the air is easy, soon sung, and very pleasing: so that, if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost, ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very flowers of English song, well adapted to those melodies, which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention, than they have procured there. But you will observe, my plan is, that every air shall in the first place have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs, for the choice of the singer.

What you say of the *Ewe-bughts* is just; I admire it, and never meant to supplant it. All I requested was, that you would try your hand on some of the inferior stanzas, which are apparently no part of the original song; but this I do not urge, because the song is of sufficient length, though those inferior stanzas be omitted, as they will be by the singer of taste. You must not think I expect *all* the songs to be of superlative merit; that were an unreasonable expectation. I am sensible that no poet can sit down doggedly to pen verses, and succeed well at all times.

I am highly pleased with your humorous and amorous rhapsody on *Bonie Leslie:* it is a thousand times better than the *Collier's Lassie*. "The deil he cou'd na scaith thee," &c. is an eccentric and happy thought. Do you not think, however, that the names of such old heroes as Alexander, sound rather queer, unless in pompous or mere burlesque verse? Instead of the line, "And never made anither," I would humbly suggest, "And ne'er made sic anither;" and I would fain have you substitute some other line for "Return to Caledonie," in the last verse, because I think this alteration of the orthography, and of the sound of Caledonie, disfigures the word, and renders it Hudibrastic.

Of the other song, *My wife's a winsome wee thing*, I think the first eight lines very good: but I do not admire the other eight, because four of them are a bare repetition of the first verses. I have been trying to spin a stanza, but could make nothing better than the following: do you mend it, or, as Yorick did with the love-letter, whip it up in your own way.

O leeze me on my wee thing,
My bonnie blythsome wee thing;
Sae lang's I hae my wee thing,
I'll think my lot divine.

Tho' warld's care we share o't,
And may see meikle mair o't,
Wi' her I'll blythly bear it,
And ne'er a word repine.

. . . . . .

You perceive, my dear sir, I avail myself of the liberty which you condescend to allow me, by speaking freely what I think. Be assured, it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem or picture I see: my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically, and at leisure, what perhaps you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the re-perusal of which, might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle.

I remain yours faithfully, &c.

P. S. Your verses upon Highland Mary are just come to hand: they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry, and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses, united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel superadded, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have heard the sad story of your Mary: you always seem inspired when you write of her.

No. VIII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

Dumfries, 1st Dec. 1792.

Your alterations of my *Nanie O* are perfectly right. So are those of *My wife's a wanton wee thing*. Your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear sir, with the freedom which characterizes our correspondence, I must not, cannot alter *Bonie Leslie*. You are right, the word "Alexander" makes the line a little uncouth, but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said, in the sublime language of scripture, that "he went forth conquering and to conquer."

"For nature made her *what she is*,
And never made anither" (such a person as she is.)

This is in my opinion more poetical than "Ne'er made sic anither." However it is immaterial: make it either way*. "Caledonie," I agree with you, is not so good a word as could be wished, though it is sanctioned in three or four instances

* Mr. Thomson has decided on *Ne'er made sic anither*. E.

by Allan Ramsay; but I cannot help it. In short, that species of stanza is the most difficult that I have ever tried.

The *Lea-rig* is as follows. *(Here the poet gives the two first stanzas as before*, p. 92, *with the following in addition.)*

The hunter lo'es the morning sun,
To rouse the mountain deer, my jo·
At noon the fisher seeks the glen,
Along the burn to steer, my jo:
Gie me the hour o' gloamin grey,
It maks my heart sae cheery, O,
To meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O.

I am interrupted. Yours, &c.

No. IX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

AULD ROB MORRIS*.

There's auld Rob Morris that wons in yon glen,
He's the king o' gude fellows and wale of auld men;
He has gowd in his coffers, he has owsen and kine,
And ae bonie lassie, his darling and mine.

She's fresh as the morning, the fairest in May;
She's sweet as the ev'ning amang the new hay;
As blythe and as artless as the lambs on the lea,
And dear to my heart as the light to my e'e.

But oh! she's an heiress, auld Robin's a laird,
And my daddie has nought but a cot-house and yard;
A wooer like me maunna hope to come speed,
The wounds I must hide that will soon be my dead.

The day comes to me, but delight brings me nane;
The night comes to me, but my rest it is gane:
I wander my lane like a night-troubled ghaist,
And I sigh as my heart it wad burst in my breast.

O had she but been of a lower degree,
I then might hae hop'd she wad smil'd upon me!
O, how past describing had then been my bliss,
As now my distraction no words can express!

. . . . . .

DUNCAN GRAY.

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
On blythe yule night when we were fu',
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
Maggie coost her head fu' high,
Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abiegh;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd;
Ha, ha, &c.
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig*,
Ha, ha, &c.
Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
Grat his een baith bleer't and blin',
Spak o' lowpin o'er a linn;
Ha, ha, &c.

Time and chance are but a tide,
Ha, ha, &c.
Slighted love is sair to bide,
Ha, ha, &c.
Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty hizzie die;
She may gae to—France for me!
Ha, ha, &c.

How it comes let doctors tell,
Ha, ha, &c.
Meg grew sick—as he grew heal,
Ha, ha, &c.
Something in her bosom wrings,
For relief, a sigh she brings;
And O! her een, they spak sic things;
Ha, ha, &c.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
Ha, ha, &c.
Maggie's was a piteous case,
Ha, ha, &c.
Duncan could na be her death,
Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath;
Now they're crouse and canty baith.
Ha, ha, the wooing o't†.

. . . . . .

4th December, 1792.

The foregoing, I submit, my dear sir, to your better judgment. Acquit them or condemn them, as seemeth good in your sight. Duncan Gray is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air, which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.

No. X.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

SONG.

Tune—"*I had a horse.*"

O poortith cauld, and restless love,
Ye wreck my peace between ye;
Yet poortith a' I could forgive,
An' 'twere na' for my Jeanie.
O why should fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearest bands untwining?

* The two first lines are taken from an old ballad—the rest is wholly original. E.

* A well-known rock in the frith of Clyde. E.

† This has nothing in common with the old licentious ballad of Duncan Gray, but the first line, and part of the third—the rest is wholly original. E.

Or why sae sweet a flower as love,
Depend on Fortune's shining?

This warld's wealth when I think on,
It's pride, and a' the lave o't;
Fie, fie on silly coward man,
That he should be the slave o't.
O why, &c.

Her een sae bonie blue betray,
How she repays my passion;
But prudence is her o'erword ay,
She talks of rank and fashion.
O why, &c.

O wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
O wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am?
O why, &c.

How blest the humble cotter's fate*!
He wooes his simple dearie;
The silly bogles wealth and state,
Can never make them eerie.
O why should fate sic pleasure have,
Life's dearer bands untwining?
Or why sae sweet a flower as love,
Depend on Fortune's shining?

GALLA WATER.

There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander thro' the blooming heather;
But Yarrow braes, nor Ettric shaws,
Can match the lads o' Galla water.

But there is ane, a secret ane,
Aboon them a' I loe him better;
And I'll be his, and he'll be mine,
The bonnie lad o' Galla water.

Altho' his daddie was nae laird,
And tho' I hae nae meikle tocher;
Yet rich in kindest, truest love,
We'll tent our flocks by Galla water.

It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
That coft contentment, peace, or pleasure;
The bands and bliss o' mutual love,
O that's the chiefest warld's treasure!

. . . . . .

Jan. 1793.

Many returns of the season to you, my dear sir. How comes on your publication? will these two foregoing be of any service to you. I should like to know what songs you print to each tune, besides the verses to which it is set. In short, I would wish to give you my opinion on all the poetry you publish. You know, it is my trade; and a man in the way of his trade may suggest useful hints, that escape men of much superior parts and endowments in other things.

If you meet with my dear and much-valued C., greet him, in my name, with the compliments of the season.

Yours, &c.

* "The wild-wood Indian's fate" in the original MS. E.

No. XI.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Edinburgh, Jan. 20, 1793.

You make me happy, my dear sir, and thousands will be happy to see the charming songs you have sent me. Many merry returns of the season to you, and may you long continue among the sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight them, and to honour yourself!

The four last songs with which you favoured me, for *Auld Rob Morris*, *Duncan Gray*, *Galla water*, and *Cauld kail*, are admirable. Duncan is indeed a lad of grace, and his humour will endear him to every body.

The distracted lover in *Auld Rob*, and the happy shepherdess in *Galla water*, exhibit an excellent contrast: they speak from genuine feeling, and powerfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in view, was limited, but I now resolve to include every Scotch air and song worth singing; leaving none behind but mere gleanings, to which the publishers of *omnegatherum* are welcome. I would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away, than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke engravings; the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively songs; and I have Dr. Beattie's promise of an essay upon the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events, or by the charms of peerless damsels, there must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

The late Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than any body, for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world, and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say it has been solely managed by me, and we had several long conversations about it, when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song, and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs, as the old ones?

To all the favourite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind, will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c. of Pleyel. To those of the comic and humorous class, I think accompaniments scarcely necessary; they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board, and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, renders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose adding bass

accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend Mr. Clarke to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do *con amore*, and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed on any thing of the kind. But for this last class of airs, I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard, Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties, about writing for the airs I sent to him, because of the peculiarity of their measure, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine air "Lord Gregory." The Scots verses printed with that air, are taken from the middle of an old ballad, called, *The Loss of Lochroyan*, which I do not admire. I have set down the air therefore as a creditor of yours. Many of the Jacobite songs are replete with wit and humour; might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs?

. . . . . .

POSTSCRIPT.

FROM THE HON. A. ERSKINE.

Mr. Thomson has been so obliging as to give me a perusal of your songs. Highland Mary is most enchantingly pathetic, and Duncan Gray possesses native genuine humour: "spak o' lowpin o'er a lin," is a line of itself that should make you immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our mutual friend C., who is a most excellent fellow, and possesses, above all men I know, the charm of a most obliging disposition. You kindly promised me, about a year ago, a collection of your unpublished productions, religious and amorous; I know from experience how irksome it is to copy. If you will get any trusty person in Dumfries to write them over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever money he asks for his trouble; and I certainly shall not betray your confidence.

I am your hearty admirer,
ANDREW ERSKINE.

No. XII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

26th January, 1793.

I approve greatly, my dear sir, of your plans. Dr. Beattie's essay will of itself be a treasure. On my part, I mean to draw up an appendix to the doctor's essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c. of our Scots songs. All the late Mr. Tytler's anecdotes, I have by me, taken down in the course of my acquaintance with him from his own mouth. I am such an enthusiast, that in the course of my several peregrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgrimage to the individual spot from which every song took its rise, *Lochaber*, and the *Braes of Ballenden*, excepted. So far as the locality, either from the title of the air, or the tenor of the song, could be ascertained, I have paid my devotions at the particular shrine of every Scots muse.

I do not doubt but you might make a very valuable collection of Jacobite songs, but would it give no offence? In the mean time, do not you think that some of them, particularly *The sow's tail to Geordie*, as an air, with other words, might be well worth a place in your collection of lively songs?

If it were possible to procure songs of merit, it would be proper to have one set of Scots words to every air, and that the set of words to which the notes ought to be set. There is a *naïveté*, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison (at least to my taste, and I will add, to every genuine Caledonian taste) with the simple pathos, or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition to your work. His *Gregory* is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots, on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter: that would be presumption indeed. My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has, I think, more of the ballad simplicity in it.

. . . . . .

LORD GREGORY.

O mirk, mirk is this midnight hour,
And loud the tempest's roar;
A waefu' wanderer seeks thy tower,
Lord Gregory, ope thy door.

An exile from her father's ha',
And a' for loving thee;
At least some *pity* on me shaw,
If *love* it may na be.

Lord Gregory, mind'st thou not the grove,
By bonie Irwine-side,
Where first I own'd that virgin-love
I lang, lang had denied.

How aften didst thou pledge and vow,
Thou wad for aye be mine;
And my fond heart, itsel sae true,
It ne'er mistrusted thine.

Hard is thy heart, lord Gregory,
And flinty is thy breast:
Thou dart of heav'n that flashest by,
O wilt thou give me rest!

Ye mustering thunders from above,
Your willing victim see!
But spare, and pardon my fause love,
His wrangs to heaven and me* !

* The song of Dr. Walcott on the same subject, is as follows.

Ah ope, lord Gregory, thy door,
A midnight wanderer sighs,
Hard rush the rains, the tempests roar,
And lightnings cleave the skies.

My most respectful compliments to the honourable gentleman, who favoured me with a postscript in your last. He shall hear from me and receive his MSS. soon.

No. XIII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

20th March, 1793.

MARY MORISON.

Tune—"*Bide ye yet.*"

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour;
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor:
How blythly wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun;
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string,
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard or saw:
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

. . . . . .

My dear sir,

The song prefixed is one of my juvenile works.

Who comes with woe at this drear night—
A pilgrim of the gloom?
If she whose love did once delight,
My cot shall yield her room.

Alas! thou heard'st a pilgrim mourn,
That once was priz'd by thee:
Think of the ring by yonder burn
Thou gav'st to love and me.

But should'st thou not poor Marian know,
I'll turn my feet and part;
And think the storms that round me blow,
Far kinder than thy heart.

It is but doing justice to Dr. Walcott to mention, that his song is the original. Mr. Burns saw it, liked it, and immediately wrote the other on the same subject, which is derived from an old Scottish ballad of uncertain origin. E.

L. of C.

I leave it in your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits. It is impossible (at least I feel it so in my stinted powers) to be always original, entertaining, and witty.

What is become of the list, &c. of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by and by. I have always looked on myself as the prince of indolent correspondents, and valued myself accordingly; and I will not, cannot bear rivalship from you, nor any body else.

No. XIV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

March, 1793.

WANDERING WILLIE.

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Now tired with wandering, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom, my ae only dearie,
And tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting;
It was na the blast brought the tear in my e'e:
Now welcome the simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

Ye hurricanes, rest in the cave o' your slumbers,
O how your wild horrors a lover alarms!
Awaken, ye breezes, row gently, ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But if he's forgotten his faithfulest Nanie,
O still flow between us, thou wide-roaring main;
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But dying believe that my Willie's my ain!

. . . . . .

I leave it to you, my dear sir, to determine whether the above, or the old *Thro' the lang muir* be the best.

No. XV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME, OH!

With alterations.

Oh open the door, some pity to show,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh*;
Tho' thou hast been false, I'll ever prove true,
Oh, open the door to me, Oh.

Cauld is the blast upon my pale cheek,
But cauldrer thy love for me, Oh:

---

* This second line was originally,
If love it may na be, Oh! E.

The frost that freezes the life at my heart,
Is nought to my pains frae thee, Oh.

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
And time is setting with me, Oh:
False friends, false love, farewell! for mair
I'll ne'er trouble them, nor thee, Oh.

She has open'd the door, she has open'd it wide,
She sees his pale corse on the plain, Oh:
My true love she cried, and sank down by his side,
Never to rise again, Oh.

I do not know whether this song be really mended.

No. XVI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

JESSIE.

Tune—"*Bonie Dundee.*"

True hearted was he, the sad swain o' the Yarrow,
And fair are the maids on the banks o' the Ayr,
But by the sweet side o' the Nith's winding river,
Are lovers as faithful, and maidens as fair:
To equal young *Jessie* seek Scotland all over;
To equal young *Jessie* you seek it in vain,
Graee, beauty, and elegance fetter her lover,
And maidenly modesty fixes the chain.

O, fresh is the rose in the gay, dewy morning,
And sweet is the lily at evening close;
But in the fair presence o' lovely young *Jessie*,
Unseen is the lily, unheeded the rose.
Love sits in her smile, a wizard ensnaring;
Enthron'd in her een he delivers his law:
And still to her charms *she* alone is a stranger!
Her modest demeanor's the jewel of a'.

No. XVII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 2d April, 1793.

I will not recognize the title you give yourself, "the prince of *indolent* correspondents;" but if the adjective were taken away, I think the title would then fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find you can furnish anecdotes with respect to most of the songs: these will be a literary curiosity.

I now send you my list of the songs, which I believe will be found nearly complete. I have put down the first lines of all the English songs, which I propose giving in addition to the Scotch verses. If any others occur to you, better adapted to the character of the airs, pray mention them, when you favour me with your strictures upon every thing else relating to the work.

Pleyel has lately sent me a number of the songs with his symphonies and accompaniments added to them. I wish you were here, that I might serve up some of them to you with your own verses, by way of dessert after dinner. There is so much delightful fancy in the symphonies, and such a delicate simplicity in the accompaniments: they are indeed beyond all praise.

I am very much pleased with the several last productions of your muse: your Lord Gregory, in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter's, beautiful as his is! Your *Here awa Willie* must undergo some alterations to suit the air. Mr. Erskine and I have been conning it over; he will suggest what is necessary to make them a fit match*.

* WANDERING WILLIE,

As altered by Mr. Erskine and Mr. Thomson.

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom my *ain* only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Winter-winds blew loud and caul at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
As simmer to nature, *so* Willie to me.

Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave o' your slumbers,
How your dread *howling* a lover alarms!
Blow soft, ye breezes! roll gently, ye billows!
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But oh if he's faithless, and minds na his Nanie,
Flow still between us, thou *dark-heaving* main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
While dying I think that my Willie's my ain.

Our poet, with his usual judgment, adopted some of these alterations, and rejected others. The last edition is as follows:

Here awa, there awa, wandering Willie,
Here awa, there awa, haud awa hame;
Come to my bosom, my ain only dearie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting,
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave of your slumbers,
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Wauken, ye breezes, row gently, ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But oh, if he's faithless, and minds na his Nanie,
Flow still between us, thou wide-roaring main;
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain.

Several of the alterations seem to be of little importance in themselves, and were adopted, it may be presumed, for the sake of suiting the words better to the music. The Homeric epithet for the sea, *dark-heaving*, suggested by Mr. Er-

This gentleman I have mentioned, whose fine taste you are no stranger to, is so well pleased both with the musical and poetical part of our work, that he has volunteered his assistance, and has already written four songs for it, which, by his own desire, I send for your perusal.

No. XVIII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

When wild war's deadly blast was blawn.

Air—"*The Mill mill O.*"

When wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
And gentle peace returning,
Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning*,
I left the lines and tented field,
Where lang I'd been a lodger,
My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
A poor and honest sodger.

A leal, light heart was in my breast,
My hand unstain'd wi' plunder;
And for fair Scotia, hame again,
I cheery on did wander.
I thought upon the banks o' Coil,
I thought upon my Nancy,
I thought upon the witching smile
That caught my youthful fancy:

At length I reach'd the bonny glen,
Where early life I sported;
I pass'd the mill and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted:
Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by her mother's dwelling!
And turn'd me round to hide the flood
That in my een was swelling.

Wi' alter'd voice, quoth I, sweet lass,
Sweet as yon hawthorn's blossom,
O! happy, happy may he be,
That's dearest to thy bosom:
My purse is light, I've far to gang,
And fain wad be thy lodger;
I've serv'd my king and country lang,
Take pity on a sodger.

Sae wistfully she gaz'd on me,
And lovelier was than ever;
Quo' she, a sodger ance I lo'ed,
Forget him shall I never:
Our humble cot, and hamely fare,
Ye freely shall partake it,
That gallant badge, the dear cockade,
Ye're welcome for the sake o't.

She gaz'd—she redden'd like a rose—
Syne pale like ony lily;
She sank within my arms and cried,
Art thou my ain dear Willie?
By Him who made yon sun and sky—
By whom true love's regarded,
I am the man; and thus may still
True lovers be rewarded!

The wars are o'er, and I'm come hame,
And find thee still true-hearted;
Tho' poor in gear, we're rich in love,
And mair we'se ne'er be parted.
Quo' she, my grandsire left me gowd,
A mailin plenish'd fairly;
And come, my faithful sodger lad,
Thou'rt welcome to it dearly!

For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
The farmer ploughs the manor;
But glory is the sodger's prize,
The sodger's wealth is honour;
The brave poor sodger ne'er despise,
Nor count him as a stranger,
Remember he's his country's stay
In day and hour of danger.

. . . . . .

MEG O' THE MILL.

Air—"*O bonie Lass will you lie in a Barrack.*"

O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten,
An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
She has gotten a coof wi' a claute o' siller,
And broken the heart o' the barley miller.

The miller was strappin, the miller was ruddy;
A heart like a lord and a hue like a lady:
The laird was a widdiefu', bleerit knurl;
She's left the gude-fellow and taen the churl.

The miller he hecht her a heart leal and loving;
The laird did address her wi' matter mair moving:
A fine pacing-horse wi' a clear chained bridle,
A whip by her side, and a bonie side-saddle.

O wae on the siller, it is sae prevailing;
And wae on the love that's fix'd on a mailin!
A tocher's nae word in a true lover's parle,
But, gie me my love, and a fig for the warl!

---

skine, is in itself more beautiful, as well perhaps as more sublime, than *wide-roaring*, which he has retained; but as it is only applicable to a placid state of the sea, or at most to the swell left on its surface after the storm is over, it gives a picture of that element not so well adapted to the ideas of eternal separation, which the fair mourner is supposed to imprecate. From the original song of *Here awa Willie*, Burns has borrowed nothing but the second line and part of the first. The superior excellence of this beautiful poem will, it is hoped, justify the different editions of it which we have given. E.

* Variation, lines 3d and 4th:

And eyes again with pleasure beam'd
That had been blear'd with mourning.

See No. XXIV.

No. XIX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

7th April, 1793.

Thank you, my dear sir, for your packet. You cannot imagine how much this business of composing for your publication has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book, &c., ballad-making is now as completely my hobby-horse, as ever fortification was Uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant that I may take the right side of the winning post!), and then cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say, or sing, "Sae merry as we a' hae been," and, raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of *Coila** shall be "Good night and joy be wi' you a'!" So much for my last words: now for a few present remarks, as they have occurred at random, on looking over your list.

The first lines of *The last time I came o'er the moor*, and several other lines in it, are beautiful; but in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay! the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to *make*, or *mend*. *For ever Fortune wilt thou prove*, is a charming song; but *Logan burn and Logan braes*, are sweetly susceptible of rural imagery: I'll try that likewise, and if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember the two last lines of a verse in some of the old songs of *Logan Water* (for I know a good many different ones) which I think pretty:

"Now my dear lad maun face his facs,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

My Patie is a lover gay, is unequal. "His mind is never muddy," is a muddy expression indeed.

"Then I'll resign and marry Pate,
And syne my cockernony."

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or your book. My song, *Rigs of Barley*, to the same tune, does not altogether please me, but if I can mend it, and thresh a few loose sentiments out of it, I will submit it to your consideration. *The lass o' Patie's mill* is one of Ramsay's best songs; but there is one loose sentiment in it, which my much-valued friend, Mr. Erskine, will take into his critical consideration. In sir J. Sinclair's Statistical volumes, are two claims, one, I think, from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honour of this song. The following anecdote, which I had from the present sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, who had it of the late John, earl of Loudon, I can, on such authorities, believe.

Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudon castle with the then earl, father to earl John; and one forenoon, riding, or walking out together, his lordship and Allan passed a sweet, romantic spot on Irwine water, still called, "Patie's Mill," where a bonie lass was "tedding hay, bareheaded on the green." My lord observed to Allan, that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint, and, lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

One day I heard Mary say, is a fine song; but, for consistency's sake, alter the name "Adonis." Were there ever such banns published, as a purpose of marriage between *Adonis* and *Mary?* I agree with you that my song, *There's nought but care on every hand*, is much superior to *Poortith cauld*. The original song *The Mill mill O*, though exeellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible; still, I like the title, and think a Scottish song would suit the notes best; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow, as an English set. *The Banks of the Dee*, is, you know, literally, *Langolee*, to slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it, for instance,

"And sweetly the nightingale sung from the *tree*."

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree; and, in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen, or heard, on the banks of the Dee, or on the banks of any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza, equal to *The small birds rejoice*, &c. I do myself honestly avow that I think it a superior song*. *John Anderson my jo*—the song to this tune, in Johnson's Museum, is my composition, and I think it not my worst: if it suit you, take it and welcome. Your collection of sentimental and pathetic songs, is, in my opinion, very complete; but not so your comic ones. Where are *Tullochgorum*, *Lumps o' pudding*, *Tibbie Fowler*, and several others, which, in my humble judgment, are well worthy of preservation? There is also one sentimental song of mine in the Museum, which never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. It is called *Craigieburn Wood;* and, in the opinion of Mr. Clarke, is one of our sweetest Scottish songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it; and I would take his taste in Scottish music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they are certainly Irish. *Shepherds I have lost my love*, is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scottish verses to it? I have made one to it a good while

* Burns here calls himself the *Voice of Coila*, in imitation of Ossian, who denominates himself the *Voice of Cona*. *Sae merry as we a' hae been*, and *Good night and joy be wi' you a'*, are the names of two Scottish tunes. E.

* It will be found in the course of this correspondence, that the bard produced a second stanza of *The Chevalier's Lament* (to which he here alludes), worthy of the first. E.

ago, which I think * * * * * * * * * * * * * but in its original state it is not quite a lady's song. I inclose an altered, not amended copy for you, if you chuse to set the tune to it, and let the Irish verses follow*.

Mr. Erskine's songs are all pretty, but his *Lone Vale* is divine.

Yours, &c.

Let me know just how you like these random hints.

No. XX.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Edinburgh, April, 1793.

I rejoice to find, my dear sir, that ballad-making continues to be your hobby-horse.—Great pity 'twould be, were it otherwise. I hope you will amble it away for many a year, and " witch the world with your horsemanship."

I know there are a good many *lively* songs of merit, that I have not put down in the list sent you; but I have them all in my eye. *My Patie is a lover gay*, though a little unequal, is a natural and very pleasing song, and I humbly think we ought not to displace or alter it, except the last stanza†.

No. XXI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

I have yours, my dear sir, this moment. I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying whatever comes uppermost.

The business of many of our tunes wanting at the beginning what fiddlers call, a starting-note, is often a rub to us poor rhymers.

" There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander thro' the blooming heather,"

You may alter to

" Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
Ye wander, &c."

My song, *Here awa, there awa*, as amended by Mr. Erskine, I entirely approve of, and return you*.

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is, in my opinion, reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point, you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either, in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad, I mean simplicity: now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, as every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces: still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. W. proposes doing with *The last time I came o'er the moor*. Let a poet, if he chuses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard, whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever, in the dark and narrow house; by heaven 'twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr. W.'s version is an improvement; but, I know Mr. W. well, and esteem him much; let him mend the song, as the Highlander mended his gun: he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel.

I do not, by this, object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in *The lass o' Patie's mill*, must be left out: the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with *Corn rigs are bonie*. Perhaps it might want the last stanza, and be the better for it. *Cauld kail in Aberdeen*, you must leave with me yet a while. I have vowed to have a song to that air, on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, *Poortith cauld and restless love*. At any rate, my other song, *Green grow the rashes*, will never suit. That song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry old tune of that name; which of course would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. Your book will be the standard of Scots songs for the future: let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send a song, on a celebrated toast in this country, to suit *Bonie Dundee*. I send you also a ballad to the *Mill mill O*†.

The last time I came o'er the moor, I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MS. Scots airs by me which I have pickt up, mostly from the singing of country lasses. They

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* Mr. Thomson, it appears, did not approve of this song, even in its altered state. It does not appear in the correspondence; but it is probably one to be found in his MSS. beginning,

" Yestreen I got a pint of wine,
A place where body saw na;
Yestreen lay on this breast of mine,
The gowden locks of Anna."

It is highly characteristic of our bard, but the strain of sentiment does not correspond with the air, to which he proposes it should be allied. E.

† The original letter from Mr. Thomson contains many observations on the Scottish songs, and on the manner of adapting the words to the music, which, at his desire, are suppressed. The subsequent letter of Mr. Burns refers to several of these observations. E.

* The reader has already seen, that Burns did not finally adopt all of Mr. Erskine's alterations. E.

† The song to the tune of *Bonie Dundee*, is that in No. XVI. The ballad to the *Mill mill O*, is that beginning,

" When wild war's deadly blasts were blawn." E.

please me vastly; but your learned *lugs** would perhaps be displeased with the very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air called *Jackie Hume's Lament?* I have a song of considerable merit to that air. I'll inclose you both the song and tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's Museum†. I send you likewise, to me, a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce*‡.

Adieu!

No. XXII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

My dear sir,

I had scarcely put my last letter into the post office, when I took up the subject of *The last time I came o'er the moor*, and ere I slept drew the outlines of the foregoing§. How far I have succeeded, I leave on this, as on every other occasion, to you to decide. I own my vanity is flattered, when you give my songs a place in your elegant and superb work; but to be of service to the work, is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert any thing of mine. One hint let me give you—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one *iota* of the original Scottish airs; I mean, in the song department; but let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.

No. XXIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 26*th April*, 1793.

I heartily thank you, my dear sir, for your last two letters, and the songs which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the frankness with which you speak out your mind, is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs of Allan Ramsay's, for example, that I think silly enough, which another person, more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally, if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge; but, at present, suffice it to say, that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition, and the ground-work of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your most interesting new ballad *When wild war's deadly blast, &c.* to the *Mill mill O*, as well as the two other songs to their respective airs; but the third and fourth line of the first verse must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music. Pleyel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would be absurd indeed! With the airs which he introduces into the sonatas, I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases, but that has nothing to do with the songs.

. . . . . .

P. S. I wish you would do as you proposed with your *Rigs of Barley*. If the loose sentiments are *threshed* out of it, I will find an air for it; but as to this there is no hurry.

No. XXIV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

June, 1793.

When I tell you, my dear sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to these accursed times, you will easily allow that it might unhinge me for doing any good among ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary matters, is trifling; but the total ruin of a much loved friend, is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming inattention to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines, in the *Mill mill O**. What you think a defect, I esteem as a positive beauty; so you see how doctors differ. I shall now, with as much alacrity as I can muster, go on with your commands.

You know Fraser, the hautboy player in Edin-

* Ears.

† The song here mentioned is that given in No. XVIII. *O ken ye what Meg o' the mill has gotten.* This song is surely Mr. Burns's own writing, though he does not generally praise his own songs so much.—*Note by Mr. Thomson.*

‡ The air here mentioned, is that for which he wrote the ballad of *Bonny Jean*, to be found p. 106. E.

§ The song alluded to here will be found in a subsequent part of this volume. E.

* The lines were the third and fourth. See p. 101.

" Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning."

As our poet had maintained a long silence, and the first number of Mr. Thomson's *Musical Work* was in the press, this gentleman ventured, by Mr. Erskine's advice, to substitute for them in that publication,

" And eyes again with pleasure beamed
That had been bleared with mourning."

Though better suited to the music, these lines are inferior to the original. This is the only alteration adopted by Mr. Thomson, which Burns did not approve, or at least assent to. E.

burgh—he is here, instructing a band of music for a fencible corps quartered in this country. Among many of his airs that please me, there is one, well known as a reel by the name of *The Quaker's Wife;* and which I remember a grand aunt of mine used to sing, by the name of *Liggeram cosh, my bonnie wee lass.* Mr. Fraser plays it slow, and with an expression that quite charms me. I became such an enthusiast about it, that I made a song for it, which I here subjoin; and inclose Fraser's set of the tune. If they hit your fancy, they are at your service; if not, return me the tune, and I will put it in Johnson's Museum. I think the song is not in my worst manner.

Tune—"*Liggeram Cosh.*"

Blythe hae I been on yon hill,
As the lambs before me;
Careless ilka thought and free,
As the breeze flew o'er me:
Now nae langer sport and play,
Mirth or sang can please me;
Lesley is sae fair and coy,
Care and anguish seize me.

Heavy, heavy is the task,
Hopeless love declaring:
Trembling, I dow nocht but glowr,
Sighing, dumb, despairing!
If she winna ease the thraws
In my bosom swelling,
Underneath the grass-green sod,
Soon maun be my dwelling.

I should wish to hear how this pleases you.

No. XXV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

June 25th, 1793.

Have you ever, my dear sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading of those mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to-day, I recollected the air of *Logan Water;* and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some public destroyer, and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequence of a country's ruin. If I have done any thing at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three-quarters of an hour's meditation in my elbow-chair, ought to have some merit.

Tune—"*Logan Water.*"

O, Logan, sweetly didst thou glide,
That day I was my Willie's bride;
And years sinsyne hae o'er us run,
Like Logan to the simmer sun.

But now thy flowery banks appear
Like drumlie winter, dark and drear,
While my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.

Again the merry month o' May
Has made our hills and valleys gay;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
The bees hum round the breathing flowers:
Blythe morning lifts his rosy eye,
And evening's tears are tears of joy:
My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

Within you milk-white hawthorn bush,
Amang her nestlings sits the thrush;
Her faithfu' mate will share her toil,
Or wi' his song her cares beguile:
But I wi' my sweet nurslings here,
Nae mate to help, nae mate to cheer,
Pass widow'd nights and joyless days,
While Willie's far frae Logan braes.

O wae upon you, men o' state,
That brethren rouse to deadly hate!
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return!
How can your flinty hearts enjoy
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry*;
But soon may peace bring happy days
And Willie, hame to Logan braes!

. . . . . .

Do you know the following beautiful little fragment, in Witherspoon's collection of Scots songs?

Air—"*Hughie Graham.*"

"O gin my love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle wa',
And I mysel' a drap o' dew,
Into her bonie breast to fa'!

Oh, there, beyond expression blest,
I'd feast on beauty a' the night;
Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
Till fley'd awa by Phebus' light."

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful; and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether, unless you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke a stanza to it, but in vain. After balancing myself for a musing five minutes, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, I produced the following.

The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place; as every poet who knows any thing of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

* Originally,

"Ye mind na, 'mid your cruel joys,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cries." E.

O were my love yon lilac fair,
Wi' purple blossoms to the spring;
And I, a bird to shelter there,
When wearied on my little wing:

How I wad mourn, when it was torn
By autumn wild, and winter rude!
But I wad sing on wanton wing,
When youthfu' May its bloom renew'd.

No. XXVI.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Monday, 1st July, 1793.

I am extremely sorry, my good sir, that any thing should happen to unhinge you. The times are terribly out of tune, and when harmony will be restored, heaven knows.

The first book of songs just published, will be dispatched to you along with this. Let me be favoured with your opinion of it frankly and freely.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the *Quaker's Wife*; it is quite enchanting. Pray, will you return the list of songs, with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included? The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work, will create a general demand for it, as soon as it is properly known. And were the sale even slower than it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labour, by the pleasure I shall receive from the music. I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done: as I shall be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to inclose a small mark of my gratitude*, and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not return it, for by heaven if you do, our correspondence is at an end: and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication, which, under your auspices, cannot fail to be respectable and interesting.

. . . . . .

Wednesday morning.

I thank you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment, and for your excellent song to Logan water: Thomson's truly elegant one will follow for the English singer. Your apostrophe to statesmen, is admirable, but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it.

* 5*l*.

No. XXVII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

My dear sir, *July 2d*, 1793.

I have just finished the following ballad, and as I do think it in my best style, I send it you. Mr. Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns's *wood-note wild*, is very fond of it; and has given it a celebrity by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return it. The song you may keep, as I remember it.

. . . . . .

There was a lass and she was fair,
At kirk and market to be seen,
When a' the fairest maids were met,
The fairest made was bonie Jean.

And aye she wrought her mammie's wark,
And aye she sang sae merrilie;
The blythest bird upon the bush,
Had ne'er a lighter heart than she.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lintwhite's nest;
And frost will blight the fairest flowers,
And love will break the soundest rest.

Young Robie was the brawest lad,
The flower and pride of a' the glen;
And he had owsen, sheep, and kye,
And wanton naigies nine or ten.

He gaed wi' Jeanie to the tryste,
He danc'd wi' Jeanie on the down;
And lang e'er witless Jeanie wist,
Her heart was tint, her peace was stown.

As in the bosom o' the stream
The moon-beam dwells at dewy e'en;
So trembling, pure, was tender love
Within the breast o' bonie Jean*.

And now she works her mammie's wark,
And aye she sighs wi' care and pain;
Yet wist na what her ail might be,
Or what wad mak her weel again.

But did na Jeanie's heart loup light,
And did na joy blink in her e'e,
As Robie tauld a tale o' love
Ae e'enin on the lily lea?

The sun was sinking in the west,
The birds sang sweet in ilka grove;
His cheek to hers he fondly prest,
And whisper'd thus his tale o' love:

* In the original MS. our poet asks Mr. Thomson if this stanza is not original. E.

O Jeanie fair, I loe thee dear;
O canst thou think to fancy me?
Or wilt thou leave thy mammie's cot,
And learn to tent the farms wi' me?

At barn or byre thou shalt na drudge,
Or naething else to trouble thee;
But stray amang the heather-bells,
And tent the waving corn wi' me.

Now what could artless Jeanie do?
She had na will to say him na:
At length she blush'd a sweet consent,
And love was aye between them twa.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair-ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full; but dashes or asterisms, so as ingenuity may find them out.

The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M. daughter to Mr. M. of D., one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager.

No. XXVIII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I assure you, my dear sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of affectation; but, as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind; I swear by that *Honour* which crowns the upright statue of *Robert Burns's Integrity*—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you! *Burns's* character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind, will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants, which the cold, unfeeling ore can supply: at least, I will take care that such a character he shall deserve.

Thank you for my copy of your publication. Never did my eyes behold, in any musical work, such elegance and correctness. Your preface, too, is admirably written; only your partiality to me has made you say too much: however, it will bind me down to double every effort, in the future progress of the work. The following are a few remarks on the songs, in the list you sent me. I never copy what I write to you, so I may be often tautological, or perhaps contradictory.

The flowers of the forest, is as charming a poem; and should be, and must be, set to the notes; but, though out of your rule, the three stanzas, beginning,

"I hae seen the smiling o' fortune beguiling,"

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalize the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance, and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs. Cockburn; I forget of what place; but from Roxburgh-shire. What a charming apostrophe is

"O fickle fortune, why this cruel sporting,
Why, why torment us—*poor sons of a day!*"

The old ballad, *I wish I were where Helen lies*, is silly, to contemptibility*. My alteration of it in Johnson's, is not much better. Mr. Pinkerton, in his, what he calls ancient ballads (many of them notorious, though beautiful enough forgeries) has the best set. It is full of his own interpolations, but no matter.

In my next I will suggest to your consideration, a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the mean time, allow me to congratulate you now, as a brother of the quill. You have *committed* your character and fame; which will now be tried, for ages to come, by the illustrious jury of the *Sons* and *Daughters of Taste*—all whom poesy can please, or music charm.

Being a bard by nature, I have some pretensions to second sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretel and affirm, that your great-grandchild will hold up your volumes, and say with honest pride, "This so much admired selection was the work of my ancestor."

No. XXIX.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Dear sir, *Edinburgh*, 1*st Aug.* 1793.

I had the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

The bonie brucket Lassie, certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. *Cauld kail in Aberdeen*, *Let me in this ae night*, and several of the livelier airs, wait the muse's leisure: these are peculiarly worthy of her choice gifts: besides, you'll notice, that in airs of this sort the singer can always do greater justice to the poet, than in the slower airs of *The Bush aboon Traquir*, *Lord Gregory*, and the like; for in the manner the latter are frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound, without the sense. Indeed both the airs and words are disguised by the very slow, languid, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed: they lose animation and expression altogether, and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a yawning!

Your ballad, *There was a lass and she was fair*, is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.

* There is a copy of this ballad given in the account of the parish of Kirkpatrick-Fleeming (which contains the tomb of fair Helen Irvine), in the statistics of sir John Sinclair, vol. xiii. p. 275, to which this character is certainly not applicable. E.

No. XXX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

My dear Thomson, *August*, 1793.

I hold the pen for our friend Clarke, who at present is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow. The *Georgium Sidus* he thinks is rather out of tune; so until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the rondeau subjects, and if more are wanted, he says you shall have them.

. . . . . .

Confound your long stairs!

S. CLARKE.

No. XXXI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Your objection, my dear sir, to the passages in my song of *Logan-water*, is right in one instance; but it is difficult to mend it: if I can, I will. The other passage you object to, does not appear in the same light to me.

I have tried my hand on *Robin Adair*, and you will probably think, with little success; but it is such a cursed, cramp, out-of-the-way measure, that I despair of doing any thing better to it.

. . . . . .

PHILLIS THE FAIR.

Tune—"*Robin Adair.*"

While larks with little wing,
Fann'd the pure air,
Tasting the breathing spring,
Forth I did fare;
Gay the sun's golden eye,
Peep'd o'er the mountains high;
Such thy morn! did I cry,
Phillis the fair.

In each bird's careless song,
Glad I did share;
While yon wild flowers among,
Chance led me there:
Sweet to the opening day,
Rosebuds bent the dewy spray;
Such thy bloom, did I say,
Phillis the fair.

Down in a shady walk,
Doves cooing were,
I mark'd the cruel hawk
Caught in a snare:
So kind may Fortune be,
Such make his destiny!
He who would injure thee,
Phillis the fair.

So much for namby-pamby. I may, after all, try my hand on it in Scots verse. There I always find myself most at home.

I have just put the last hand to the song I meant for *Cauld Kail in Aberdeen*. If it suits you to insert it, I shall be pleased, as the heroine is a favorite of mine: if not, I shall also be pleased; because I wish, and will be glad, to see you act decidedly on the business*. 'Tis a tribute as a man of taste, and as an editor, which you owe yourself.

No. XXXII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My good sir, *August*, 1793.

I consider it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured me so many of your much valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to St. Stephen for the tunes: tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my stair-case, conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d'esprit*; which I perused more than once, without discovering exactly whether your discussion was music, astronomy, or politics: though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one, you were just drowning care together; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study how to remedy!

I shall be glad to see you give *Robin Adair* a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out of the way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with. I wish you would invoke the muse for a single elegant stanza to be substituted for the concluding objectionable verses of *Down the Burn Davie*, so that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

Mr. Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your *John Anderson my Jo*, which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs; you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs. Anderson in great good humour is clapping John's shoulders, while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to shew that he *fully* recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were *first acquent*. The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.

No. XXXIII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

That crinkum-crankum tune, *Robin Adair*, has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my

* The song herewith sent, is that in *p.* 96, 97 of this volume. E.

last attempt, that I have ventured, in this morning's walk, one essay more. You, my dear sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend C.'s story, which happened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice as follows.

. . . . . .

SONG.

Had I a cave on some wild, distant shore,
Where the winds howl to the waves' dashing roar:
There would I weep my woes,
There seek my lost repose,
'Till grief my eyes should close,
Ne'er to wake more.

Falsest of womankind, canst thou declare,
All thy fond plighted vows—fleeting as air!
To thy new lover hie,
Laugh o'er thy perjury,
Then in thy bosom try,
What peace is there!

. . . . . .

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander, in Breadalbane's Fencibles, which are quartered here, who assures me that he well remembers his mother's singing Gaelic songs to both *Robin Adair* and *Gramachree*. They certainly have more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness; so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland, that could bring them;—except, what I shrewdly suspect to be the case, the wandering minstrels, harpers, and pipers, used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, and so some favourite airs might be common to both.—A case in point—They have lately, in Ireland, published an Irish air, as they say, called *Caun du delish*. The fact is, in a publication of Corri's, a great while ago, you will find the same air called a Highland one, with a Gaelic song *set* to it. Its name there, I think, is *Oran Gaoil*, and a fine air it is. Do ask honest Allan, or the Rev. Gaelic parson, about these matters.

No. XXXIV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

My dear sir, *August*, 1793.

Let me in this ae night, I will reconsider. I am glad that you are pleased with my song, *Had I a cave*, &c. as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening, with a volume of the Museum in my hand; when turning up *Allan Water*, "What numbers shall the muse repeat, &c." as the words appeared to me rather unworthy of so fine an air; and recollecting that it is on your list, I sat, and raved, under the shade of an old thorn, 'till I wrote one to suit the measure. I may be wrong; but I think it not in my worst style. You must know, that in Ramsay's Tea-table, where the modern song first appeared the ancient name of the tune, Allan says, is *Allan Water*, or *My love Annie's very bonie*. This last has certainly been a line of the original song; so I took up the idea, and, as you will see, have introduced the line in its place, which I presume it formerly occupied; though I likewise give you a *chusing line*, if it should not hit the cut of your fancy.

. . . . . .

By Allan-stream I chanc'd to rove,
While Phœbus sank beyond Benleddi*;
The winds were whispering thro' the grove,
The yellow corn was waving ready:
I listen'd to a lover's sang,
And thought on youthfu' pleasures mony;
And aye the wild-wood echoes rang—
O dearly do I lo'e thee, Annie†.

O happy be the woodbine bower,
Nae nightly bogle make it eerie;
Nor ever sorrow stain the hour,
The place and time I met my dearie!
Her head upon my throbbing breast,
She, sinking, said, "I'm thine for ever!"
While mony a kiss the seal imprest,
The sacred vow, we ne'er should sever.

The haunt o' spring's the primrose brae,
The simmer joys the flocks to follow;
How cheery, thro' her shortening day,
Is autumn in her weeds o' yellow;
But can they melt the glowing heart,
Or chain the soul in speechless pleasure,
Or thro' each nerve the rapture dart,
Like meeting her, our bosom's treasure.

Bravo! say I: it is a good song. Should you think so too (not else) you can set the music to it, and let the other follow, as English verses.

Autumn is my propitious season. I make more verses in it, than in all the year else.

God bless you!

No. XXXV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Is *Whistle and I'll come to you my lad*, one of your airs? I admire it much; and yesterday I set the following verses to it. Urbani, whom I have met with here, begged them of me, as he admires the air much; but as I understand that he looks with rather an evil eye on your work, I did not choose to comply. However, if the song does not suit your taste, I may possibly send it him. The set of the air which I had in my eye, is in Johnson's Museum.

. . . . . .

* A mountain west of Strath-Allan, 3009 feet high. R. B.

† Or, "O my love Annie's very bonie." R. B.

O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad*,
O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad:
Tho' father and mither and a' should gae mad,
O whistle and I'll come to you, my lad.

But warily tent, when ye come to court me,
And come nae unless the back-yett be a-jee;
Syne up the back-style and let nae body see,
And come as ye were na comin to me.
And come, &c.
O whistle, &c.

At kirk or at market whene'er ye meet me,
Gang by me as tho' that ye ear'd nae a flie;
But steal me a blink o' your bonie black e'e,
Yet look as ye were na lookin at me.
Yet look, &c.
O whistle, &c.

Aye vow and protest that ye care na for me,
And whiles ye may lightly my beauty a wee;
But court nae anither, tho' jokin ye be,
For fear that she wyle your fancy frae me.
For fear, &c.
O whistle, &c.

. . . . . .

Another favourite air of mine, is, *The muckin o' Geordie's byre.* When sung slow with expression, I have wished that it had had better poetry: that I have endeavoured to supply, as follows.

Adown winding Nith I did wander,
To mark the sweet flowers as they spring;
Adown winding Nith I did wander,
Of Phillis to muse and to sing.

CHORUS.

Awa wi' your belles and your beauties,
They never wi' her can compare:
Whaever has met wi' my Phillis,
Has met wi' the queen o' the fair.

The daisy amus'd my fond fancy,
So artless, so simple, so wild;
Thou emblem, said I, o' my Phillis,
For she is simplicity's child.
Awa, &c.

The rose-bud's the blush o' my charmer,
Her sweet balmy lip when 'tis prest:
How fair and how pure is the lily,
But fairer and purer her breast.
Awa, &c.

Yon knot of gay flowers in the arbour,
They ne'er wi' my Phillis can vie:
Her breath is the breath o' the woodbine,
Its dew-drop o' diamond, her eye.
Awa, &c.

Her voice is the song of the morning
That wakes thro' the green-spreading grove,
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
On music, and pleasure, and love.
Awa, &c.

But beauty how frail and how fleeting,
The bloom of a fine summer's day!
While worth in the mind o' my Phillis
Will flourish without a decay*.
Awa, &c.

. . . . . .

Mr. Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a corner in your book, as she is a particular flame of his. She is a Miss P. M. sister to *Bonie Jean.* They are both pupils of his. You shall hear from me, the very first grist I get from my rhyming mill.

No. XXXVI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

That tune, *Cauld Kail*, is such a favourite of yours, that I once more roved out yesterday for a gloamin-shot at the muses†; when the muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet simple inspirer that was by my elbow, "smooth gliding without step," and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her; so I more than suspect that she has followed me hither, or at least makes me occasional visits: secondly, the last stanza of this song I send you, is the very words that Coila taught me many years ago, and which I set to an old Scots reel in Johnson's Museum.

. . . . . .

Air—"*Cauld Kail.*"

Come let me take thee to my breast,
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder;
And I shall spurn as vilest dust
The warld's wealth and grandeur:

---

* In some of the MSS. the four first lines run thus,

O whistle and I'll come to thee, my jo,
O whistle and I'll come to thee, my jo;
Tho' father and mother and a' should say no,
O whistle and I'll come to thee, my jo. E.

See also No. LXXVII. of this Correspondence.

* This song, certainly beautiful, would appear to more advantage without the chorus; as is indeed the case with several other songs of our author. E.

† Gloamin—twilight, probably from glooming. A beautiful poetical word, which ought to be adopted in England. A gloamin-shot, a twilight-interview. E.

And do I hear my Jeanie own,
That equal transports move her?
I ask for dearest life alone
That I may live to love her.

Thus in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure;
I'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share,
Than sic a moment's pleasure:
And by thy e'en, sae bonie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never.

. . . . . .

If you think the above will suit your idea of your favourite air, I shall be highly pleased. *The last time I came o'er the Moor*, I cannot meddle with, as to mending it; and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of chorusses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

No. XXXVII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

DAINTY DAVIE.

Now rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers;
And now come in my happy hours,
To wander wi' my Davie.

CHORUS.

Meet me on the warlock knowe,
Dainty Davie, dainty Davie,
There I'll spend the day wi' you,
My ain dear dainty Davie.

The crystal waters round us fa',
The merry birds are lovers a',
The scented breezes round us blaw,
A wandering wi' my Davie.
Meet me, &c.

When purple morning starts the hare
To steal upon her early fare,
Then thro' the dews I will repair,
To meet my faithfu' Davie.
Meet me, &c.

When day, expiring in the west,
The curtain draws o' nature's rest,
I flee to his arms I loe best,
And that's my ain dear Davie.

CHORUS.

Meet me on the warlock knowe,
Bonie Davie, dainty Davie,
There I'll spend the day wi' you,
*My ain dear dainty Davie**.

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune. See Clarke's set of it in the Museum.

N. B. In the Museum they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is * * * * nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

No. XXXVIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My dear sir, *Edinburgh*, 1*st Sept.* 1793.

Since writing to you last, I have received half a dozen songs, with which I am delighted beyond expression. The humour and fancy of *Whistle and I'll come to you my lad*, will render it nearly as great a favourite as *Duncan Gray*. *Come let me take thee to my breast*, *Adown winding Nith*, and *By Allan stream*, &c. are full of imagination and feeling, and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended. *Had I a cave on some wild distant shore*, is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend to whose story it refers, read it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think, can never be broken; these songs of yours will descend with the music to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the muse seems so propitious, I think it right to inclose a list of all the favours I have to ask of her, no fewer than twenty and three! I have burdened the pleasant Peter with as many as it is probable he will attend to: most of the remaining airs would puzzle the English poet not a little; they are of that peculiar measure and rhythm, that they must be familliar to him who writes for them.

No. XXXIX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

You may readily trust, my dear sir, that any exertion in my power, is heartily at your service. But one thing I must hint to you; the very name of Peter Pindar is of great service to your publication, so get a verse from him now and then; though I have no objection, as well as I can, to bear the burden of the business.

You know that my pretensions to musical taste, are merely a few of nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason, many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint; however they may transport and ravish the ears of your connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends,

* *Dainty Davie* is the title of an old Scotch song, from which Burns has taken nothing but the title and the measure. E.

I am delighted with many little melodies, which the learned musician despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air *Hey tuttie tuttie* may rank among this number; but well I know that, with Fraser's hautboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears. There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places of Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my solitary wanderings, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of Liberty and Independence, which I threw into a kind of *Scottish* ode, fitted to the air that one might suppose to be the gallant *Royal Scot's* address to his heroic followers, on that eventful morning*.

. . . . . .

Bruce to his Troops on the eve of the Battle of

BANNOCK-BURN.

To its ain tune.

Scots, wha hae wi' *Wallace* bled,
Scots, wham *Bruce* has often led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victorie.

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for *Scotland's* king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or *Free-man* fa',
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us *do*, or *die*!

. . . . . .

So may God ever defend the cause of Truth and Liberty, as he did that day!—Amen.

P. S. I shewed the air to Urbani, who was highly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it, but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject, till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused my rhyming mania. Clarke's set of the tune, with his bass, you will find in the Museum; though I am afraid that the air is not what will entitle it to a place in your elegant selection.

* This noble strain was conceived by our poet during a storm among the wilds of Glen-Ken in Galloway. A more finished copy will be found afterwards. E.

No. XL.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

Sept. 1793.

I dare say, my dear sir, that you will begin to think my correspondence is persecution. No matter, I can't help it; a ballad is my hobby-horse; which, though otherwise a simple sort of harmless idiotical beast enough, has yet this blessed headstrong property, that when once it has fairly made off with a hapless wight, it gets so enamoured with the tinkle-gingle, tinkle-gingle of its own bells, that it is sure to run poor pilgarlick, the bedlam jockey, quite beyond any useful point or post in the common race of man.

The following song I have composed for *Orangaoil*, the Highland air that you tell me in your last, you have resolved to give a place to, in your book. I have this moment finished the song; so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well! if not, 'tis also well!

. . . . . .

Tune—" *Oran-gaoil.*"

Behold the hour, the boat arrive;
Thou goest, thou darling of my heart:
Sever'd from thee can I survive?
But fate has will'd, and we must part.
I'll often greet this surging swell,
Yon distant isle will often hail:
" E'en here, I took the last farewell;
There latest mark'd her vanish'd sail."

Along the solitary shore
While flitting sea-fowl round me cry,
Across the rolling, dashing roar
I'll westward turn my wistful eye:
Happy, thou Indian grove, I'll say,
Where now my Nancy's path may be!
While thro' thy sweets she loves to stray,
O tell me, does she muse on me!

No. XLI.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 5th Sept. 1793.

I believe it is generally allowed, that the greatest modesty is the sure attendant of the greatest merit. While you are sending me verses that even Shakespeare might be proud to own, you speak of them, as if they were ordinary productions! Your heroic ode is to me the noblest composition of the kind, in the Scottish language. I happened to dine

yesterday with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it, intreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as *Hey tuttie tattie*. Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it, for I never heard any person, and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs, I say, I never heard any one speak of it, as worthy of notice.

I have been running over the whole hundred airs, of which I lately sent you the list; and I think *Lewie Gordon* is most happily adapted to your ode; at least with a very slight variation of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. There is in *Lewie Gordon* more of the grand than the plaintive, particularly when it is sung with a degree of spirit, which your words would oblige the singer to give it. I would have no scruple about substituting your ode in the room of *Lewie Gordon*, which has neither the interest, the grandeur, nor the poetry that characterize your verses. Now the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse, the only line too short for the air, is as follows:

Verse 1*st*, Or to *glorious* victorie.
2*d*, *Chains*—chains, and slaverie.
3*d*, Let him, *let him*, turn and flee.
4*th*, Let him *bravely* follow me,
5*th*, But *they shall*, they shall be free.
6*th*, Let us, *let us* do, or die!

If you connect each line with its own verse, I do not think you will find that either the sentiment or the expression loses any of its energy. The only line which I dislike in the whole of the song is, "Welcome to your gory bed." Would not another word be preferable to *welcome*? In your next I will expect to be informed whether you agree to what I have proposed. The little alterations I submit with the greatest deference.

The beauty of the verses you have made for *Oran-gaoil*, will insure celebrity to the air.

No. XLII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I have received your list, my dear sir, and here go my observations on it*.

Down the burn Davie. I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza, thus:

As down the burn they took their way,
And thro' the flowery dale;
His cheek to hers he aft did lay,
And love was ay the tale.

With "Mary, when shall we return,
Sic pleasure to renew?"
Quoth Mary, "Love, I like the burn,
And ay shall follow you*."

Thro' the wood laddie—I am decidedly of opinion, that both in this, and *There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame*, the second or high part of the tune, being a repetition of the first part an octave higher, is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

Cowden-knowes. Remember in your index that the song in pure English to this tune, beginning

"When summer comes the swains on Tweed,"

is the production of Crawford. Robert was his Christian name.

Laddie lie near me, must *lie by me* for some time. I do not know the air; and until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is), I can never compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me, that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fire-side of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way.

What cursed egotism!

Gill Morice, I am for leaving out. It is a plaguy length; the air itself is never sung; and its place can well be supplied by one or two songs for fine airs that are not in your list. For instance, *Craigieburn-Wood*, and *Roy's wife*. The first, beside its intrinsic merit, has novelty; and the last has high merit as well as great celebrity. I have the original words of a song for the last air, in the handwriting of the lady who composed it; and they are superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen†.

Highland-laddie. The old set will please a mere Scotch ear best; and the new an Italianized one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls the old *Highland-laddie*, which pleases more than either of them. It is sometimes called *Ginglan Johnnie*; it being the air of an old humorous tawdry song of that name. You will find it in the Museum, *I hae been at Crookieden, &c.* I would advise you, in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the muses for inspiring direction; and in the mean

* Mr. Thomson's list of songs for his publication. In his remarks, the bard proceeds in order, and goes through the whole; but on many of them he merely signifies his approbation. All his remarks of any importance, are presented to the reader. E.

* This alteration Mr. Thomson has adopted (or at least intended to adopt), instead of the last stanza of the original song, which is objectionable in point of delicacy. E.

† This song, so much admired by our bard, will be found in a future part of the volume, *p.* 131. E.

time, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is not a doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

Auld sir Simon. I must beg you to leave out, and put in its place *The Quaker's wife.*

Blythe hae I been o'er the hill, is one of the finest songs ever I made in my life; and besides, is composed on a young lady, positively the most beautiful, lovely woman in the world. As I purpose giving you the names and designations of all my heroines, to appear in some future edition of your work perhaps half a century hence, you must certainly include *the boniest lass in a' the warld* in your collection.

Daintie Davie, I have heard sung, nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune; and nothing has surprised me so much, as your opinion on this subject. If it will not suit, as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

Fee him father—I inclose you Fraser's set of this tune when he plays it slow; in fact he makes it the language of despair. I shall here give you two stanzas, in that style; merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Frazer gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which *Patie Allan's mither died, that was about the back o' midnight;* and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company, except the hautboy and the muse.

. . . . . .

Thou hast left me ever, Jamie, Thou hast left me ever,
Thou hast left me ever, Jamie, Thou hast left me ever.
Aften hast thou vow'd that death, Only should us sever,
Now thou's left thy lass for ay—I maun see thee never Jamie.
I'll see thee never*.

Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie, Thou hast me forsaken:
Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie, Thou hast me forsaken:
Thou canst love anither jo, While my heart is breaking:
Soon my weary e'en I'll close—Never mair to waken, Jamie,
Ne'er mair to waken†.

. . . . . .

Jockie and Jenny I would discard, and in its place would put *There's nae luck about the house*, which has a very pleasant air; and which is positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scottish, or perhaps in any other language. *When she came ben she bobbet*, as an air, is more beautiful than either, and, in the *andante* way, would unite with a charming sentimental ballad.

Saw ye my father, is one of my greatest favourites. The evening before last, I wandered out, and began a tender song, in what I think is its native style. I must premise, that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting note, as the fiddlers call it, but to burst at once into the pathos. Every country girl sings—*Saw* ye my father, &c.

My song is but just begun; and I should like, before I proceed, to know your opinion of it. I have sprinkled it with the Scottish dialect, but it may be easily turned into correct English*.

. . . . . .

Todlin hame. Urbani mentioned an idea of his, which has long been mine; that this air is highly susceptible of pathos: accordingly, you will soon hear him, at your concert, try it to a song of mine in the Museum; *Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon.* One song more, and I have done; *Auld lang syne.* The air is but *mediocre;* but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air.

. . . . . .

AULD LANG SYNE.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days o' lang syne?

CHORUS.

For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll take a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.

We twae hae run about the braes,
And put't the gowans fine;
But we've wandered mony a weary foot
Sin auld lang syne.
For auld, &c.

We twae hae paidlet i' the burn,
Frae mornin sun till dine:
But seas between us braid hae roar'd,
Sin auld lang syne.
For auld, &c.

And here's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine;

---

* The Scottish (the editor uses the word substantively, as the English) employ the abbreviation *I'll* for *I shall* as well as *I will;* and it is for *I shall* it is used here. In Anandale, as in the northern counties of England, for *I shall*, they use *I'se*. E.

† This is the whole of the song. The bard never proceeded farther. *Note by Mr. Thomson.*

* This song appears afterwards. It begins,

"Where are the joys I hae met in the morning." E.

And we'll tak a right gude wille-waught,
For auld lang syne.
For auld, &c.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
And surely I'll be mine;
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne*.
For auld, &c.

. . . . . .

Now, I suppose I have tired your patience fairly. You must, after all is over, have a number of ballads, properly so called. *Gill Morice*, *Tranent Muir*, *M'Pherson's farewell*, *Battle of Sheriff-muir*, or *We ran and they ran* (I know the author of this charming ballad, and his history), *Hardiknute*, *Barbara Allan* (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared); and besides, do you know that I really have the old tune to which *The Cherry and the Slae* was sung; and which is mentioned as a well known air in Scotland's Complaint, a book published before poor Mary's days? It was then called *The banks o' Helicon;* an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's history of Scottish music. The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

No. XLIII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I am happy, my dear sir, that my ode pleases you so much. Your idea, "honour's bed," is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so, if you please, we will let the line stand as it is. I have altered the song as follows.

BANNOCK-BURN.

Robert Bruce's Address to his Army.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled;
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to glorious victorie.

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power—
Edward! chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Traitor? coward! turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Free-man stand, or free-man fa',
Caledonian! on wi' me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be—shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe;
Liberty's in every blow!
Forward! let us do, or die!

. . . . . .

N. B. I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace.

"A false usurper sinks in every foe,
And liberty returns with every blow."

A couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday you had enough of my correspondence. The post goes, and my head aches miserably. One comfort: I suffer so much, just now, in this world, for last night's joviality, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the world to come. Amen!

No. XLIV.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

12*th Sept.* 1793.

A thousand thanks to you, my dear sir, for your observations on the list of my songs. I am happy to find your ideas so much in unison with my own respecting the generality of the airs, as well as the verses. About some of them we differ, but there is no disputing about hobby-horses. I shall not fail to profit by the remarks you make; and to reconsider the whole with attention.

Dainty Davie must be sung, two stanzas together, and then the chorus; 'tis the proper way. I agree with you, that there may be something of pathos, or tenderness at least, in the air of *Fee him Father*, when performed with feeling: but a tender cast may be given almost to any lively air, if you sing it very slowly, expressively, and with serious words. I am, however, clearly and invariably for retaining the cheerful tunes joined to their own humorous verses, wherever the verses are passable. But the sweet song for *Fee him Father*, which you began about the back of midnight, I will publish as an additional one. Mr. James Balfour, the king of good fellows, and the best singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with *Fee him Father*, and with *Todlin hame* also, to the old words, which never should be disunited from either of these airs. Some bacchanals I would wish to discard. *Fy let's a' to the bridal*, for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers; and *Saw ye my Father*, appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying any thing to

* This song, of the olden time, is excellent. It is worthy of our bard. E.

his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. Gory, presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them, "Welcome to your gory bed," seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shewn the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest,

"Now prepare for honour's bed,
Or for glorious victorie."

No. XLV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

September. 1793.

"Who shall decide, when doctors disagree?" My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconsidering it; as I think I have much improved it. Instead of "soger! hero!" I will have it "Caledonian! on wi' me!"

I have scrutinized it, over and over; and to the world some way or other it shall go as it is. At the same time it will not in the least hurt me, should you leave it out altogether, and adhere to your first intention of adopting Logan's verses*.

I have finished my song to *Saw ye my father* and in English, as you will see. That there is a syllable too much for the *expression* of the air, is true; but, allow me to say, that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver, is not a great matter: however, in that, I have no pretensions to cope in judgment with you. Of the poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular: my advice is to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses. Here they are—

FAIR JENNY.

See pa. 115.

Tune—"*Saw ye my Father.*"

Where are the joys I have met in the morning,
That dane'd to the lark's early song?
Where is the peace that awaited my wand'ring,
At evening the wild-woods among?

No more a winding the course of yon river,
And marking sweet flowrets so fair:
No more I trace the light footsteps of pleasure,
But sorrow and sad-sighing care.

Is it that summer's forsaken our valleys,
And grim, surly winter is near?
No, no, the bees humming round the gay roses,
Proclaim it the pride of the year.

Fain would I hide, what I fear to discover,
Yet long, long too well have I known:
All that has caused this wreck in my bosom,
Is Jenny, fair Jenny alone.

* Mr. Thomson has very properly adopted this song (if it may be so called) as the bard presented it to him. He has attached it to the air of *Lewie Gordon*, and perhaps among the existing airs he could not find a better; but the poetry is suited to a much higher strain of music, and may employ the genius of some Scottish Handel, if any such should in future arise. The reader will have observed, that Burns adopted the alterations proposed by his friend and correspondent in former instances, with great readiness; perhaps, indeed, on all indifferent occasions. In the present instance, however, he rejected them, though repeatedly urged, with determined resolution. With every respect for the judgment of Mr. Thomson and his friends, we may be satisfied that he did so. He who, in preparing for an engagement, attempts to withdraw his imagination from images of death, will probably have but imperfect success, and is not fitted to stand in the ranks of battle, where the liberties of a kingdom are at issue. Of such men, the conquerors at Bannock-burn were not composed. Bruce's troops were inured to war, and familiar with all its sufferings and dangers. On the eve of that memorable day, their spirits were, without doubt, wound up to a pitch of enthusiasm suited to the occasion; a pitch of enthusiasm, at which danger becomes attractive, and the most terrific forms of death are no longer terrible. Such a strain of sentiment, this heroic "welcome" may be supposed well calculated to elevate—to raise their hearts high above fear, and to nerve their arms to the utmost pitch of mortal exertion. These observations might be illustrated and supported, by a reference to the martial poetry of all nations, from the spirit-stirring strains of Tyrtæus, to the war-song of general Wolfe. Mr. Thomson's observation, that "Welcome to your gory bed, is a discouraging address," seems not sufficiently considered. Perhaps, indeed, it may be admitted, that the term *gory*, is somewhat objectionable, not on account of its presenting a frightful, but a disagreeable image to the mind. But a great poet, uttering his conceptions on an interesting occasion, seeks always to present a picture that is vivid, and is uniformly disposed to sacrifice the delicacies of taste on the altar of the imagination. And it is the privilege of superior genius, by producing a new association, to elevate expressions that were originally low, and thus to triumph over the deficiencies of language. In how many instances might this be exemplified from the works of our immortal Shakespeare?

"Who would *fardels* bear,
To groan and *sweat* under a weary life;—
When he himself might his *quietus* make
With a *bare bodkin?*"

It were easy to enlarge, but to suggest such reflections, is probably sufficient. E.

Time cannot aid me, my griefs are immortal,
Nor hope dare a comfort bestow:
Come then, enamour'd and fond of my anguish,
Enjoyment I'll seek in my woe.

Adieu, my dear sir! The post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure.

No. XLVI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I have been turning over some volumes of songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs for which you have allotted me to find English songs.

For *Muirland Willie* you have, in Ramsay's Tea-table, an excellent song, beginning "Ah, why those tears in Nelly's eyes." As for *The Collier's dochter*, take the following old Bacchanal.

. . . . . .

Deluded swain, the pleasure
The fickle fair can give thee,
Is but a fairy treasure,
Thy hopes will soon deceive thee.

The billows on the ocean,
The breezes idly roaming,
The clouds' uncertain motion,
They are but types of woman.

O! art thou not ashamed,
To doat upon a feature?
If man thou wouldst be named,
Despise the silly creature.

Go find an honest fellow;
Good claret set before thee:
Hold on till thou art mellow,
And then to bed in glory.

The faulty line in Logan-water, I mend thus;

"How can your flinty hearts enjoy
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry."

The song, otherwise, will pass. As to *M'Gregoira Rua-Ruth*, you will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours in the Museum, vol. ii. p. 181. The song begins:

"Raving winds around her blowing*."

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the *Banks of Banna* for instance, though really Irish, yet in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number? We could easily find this quantity of charming airs; I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of *Roy's Wife*, for the music's sake, we shall not insert it. *Deil tak the wars*, is a charming song; so is, *Saw ye my Peggy*. *There's nae luck about the house*, well deserves a place. I cannot say that, *O'er the hills and far awa*, strikes me, as equal to your selection. *This is no my ain house*, is a great favourite air of mine; and if you will send me your set of it, I will task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of, *I hae laid a herrin in saut?* I like it much. Your Jacobite airs are pretty; and there are many others of the same kind, pretty; but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think, insert, *Fye let us a' to the bridal*, to any other words than its own.

What pleases me as simple and *naive*, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, *Fie gie me my coggie Sirs*, *Fie let us a' to the bridal*, with several others of that cast, are, to me, highly pleasing; while, *Saw ye my father or saw ye my mother*, delights me with its descriptive simple pathos. Thus my song, *Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?* pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this; but, "Ilka man wears his belt his ain gait."

No. XLVII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

October, 1793.

Your last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy news. Alas, poor Erskine*! The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication, has, till now, scared me from writing to you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to the air of the *Quaker's Wife*; though, by the bye, an old highland gentleman and a deep antiquarian, tells me it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of *Leiger m' choss*. The following verses, I hope, will please you, as an English song to the air.

Thine am I, my faithful fair,
Thine, my lovely Nancy;
Ev'ry pulse along my veins,
Ev'ry roving fancy.

To thy bosom lay my heart,
There to throb and languish:
Tho' despair had wrung its core,
That would heal its anguish.

Take away these rosy lips,
Rich with balmy treasure:

* This will be found among the songs published in the *Museum*. E.

* The honourable A. Erskine, brother to lord Kelly, whose melancholy death Mr. Thomson had communicated in an excellent letter, which he has suppressed. E.

Turn away thine eyes of love,
Lest I die with pleasure.

What is life when wanting love?
Night without a morning:
Love's the cloudless summer sun,
Nature gay adorning.

. . . . . .

Your objection to the English song I proposed for *John Anderson my jo*, is certainly just. The following is by an old acquaintance of mine, and I think has merit. The song was never in print, which I think is so much in your favour. The more original good poetry your collection contains, it certainly has so much the more merit.

SONG,

BY GAVIN TURNBULL.

O condescend, dear, charming maid,
My wretched state to view;
A tender swain to love betray'd,
And sad despair, by you.

While here, all melancholy,
My passion I deplore,
Yet, urg'd by stern resistless fate,
I love thee more and more.

I heard of love, and with disdain
The urchin's power denied;
I laugh'd at every lover's pain,
And mock'd them when they sigh'd:

But how my state is alter'd!
Those happy days are o'er;
For all thy unrelenting hate,
I love thee more and more.

O yield, illustrious beauty, yield,
No longer let me mourn;
And tho' victorious in the field,
Thy captive do not scorn.

Let generous pity warm thee,
My wonted peace restore;
And grateful, I shall bless thee still,
And love thee more and more.

. . . . . .

The following address of Turnbull's to the nightingale, will suit as an English song to the air, *There was a lass and she was fair*. By the bye, Turnbull has a great many songs in MS. which I can command, if you like his manner. Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine, I may be prejudiced in his favour; but I like some of his pieces very much.

. . . . . .

THE NIGHTINGALE.

BY G. TURNBULL.

Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,
That ever tried the plaintive strain,
Awake thy tender tale of love,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

For, tho' the muses deign to aid,
And teach him smoothly to complain;
Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,
Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

All day, with fashion's gaudy sons,
In sport she wanders o'er the plain;
Their tales approves, and still she shuns
The notes of her forsaken swain.

When evening shades obscure the sky,
And bring the solemn hours again,
Begin, sweet bird, thy melody,
And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

. . . . . .

I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull's, which would go charmingly to *Lewie Gordon*.

LAURA.

BY G. TURNBULL.

Let me wander where I will,
By shady wood, or winding rill;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers;
Where the linnet's early song
Echoes sweet the woods among;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

If at rosy dawn I chuse
To indulge the smiling muse;
If I court some cool retreat,
To avoid the noon-tide heat;
If beneath the moon's pale ray,
Thro' unfrequented wilds I stray;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

When at night the drowsy god
Waves his sleep-compelling rod,
And to fancy's wakeful eyes
Bids celestial visions rise;
While with boundless joy I rove
Thro' the fairy land of love:
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

. . . . . .

The rest of your letter I shall answer at some other opportunity.

No. XLVIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My good sir, *7th Nov.* 1793.

After so long a silence it gave me peculiar pleasure to recognise your well-known hand, for I had begun to be apprehensive that all was not well with you. I am happy to find, however, that your silence did not proceed from that cause, and that you have got among the ballads once more.

I have to thank you for your English song to *Leiger m' choss*, which I think extremely good, although the colouring is warm. Your friend Mr. Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable merit; and as you have the command of his manuscripts, I hope you may find out some that will answer as English songs, to the airs yet unprovided.

No. XLIX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

December, 1793.

Tell me how you like the following verses to the tune of *Jo Janet*.

Husband, husband, cease your strife,
Nor longer idly rave, sir;
Tho' I am your wedded wife,
Yet I am not your slave, sir.

"One of two must still obey,
Nancy, Nancy;
Is it man or woman, say,
My spouse Nancy?"

If 'tis still the lordly word,
Service and obedience;
I'll desert my sov'reign lord,
And so, good b'ye allegiance!

"Sad will I be, so bereft,
Nancy, Nancy,
Yet I'll try to make a shift,
My spouse Nancy."

My poor heart then break it must,
My last hour I'm near it:
When you lay me in the dust,
Think, think how you will bear it.

"I will hope and trust in heaven,
Nancy, Nancy;
Strength to bear it will be given,
My spouse Nancy."

Well, sir, from the silent dead,
Still I'll try to daunt you;
Ever round your midnight bed
Horrid sprites shall haunt you.

"I'll wed another, like my dear,
Nancy, Nancy;
Then all hell will fly for fear,
My spouse Nancy."

Air—"*The Sutor's Dochter.*"

Wilt thou be my dearie?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
Wilt thou let me cheer thee?
By the treasure of my soul,
That's the love I bear thee!
I swear and vow that only thou
Shall ever be my dearie.
Only thou, I swear and vow,
Shall ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou lo'es me;
Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou'lt refuse me:
If it winna, canna be,
Thou for thine may chuse me,
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.
Lassie let me quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.

No. L.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My dear sir, *Edinburgh, 17th April*, 1794.

Owing to the distress of our friend for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter, I had not an opportunity till lately of perusing it*. How sorry I am to find Burns saying, "canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" while *he* is delighting others from one end of the island to the other. Like the hypochondriac who went to consult a physician upon his case. Go, says the doctor, and see the famous Carlini, who keeps all Paris in good humour. Alas, sir, replied the patient, I am that unhappy Carlini!

Your plan for our meeting together pleases me greatly, and I trust that by some means or other it will soon take place; but your Bacchanalian challenge almost frightens me, for I am a miserable weak drinker!

Allan is much gratified by your good opinion of his talents. He has just begun a sketch from your Cotter's Saturday Night, and, if it pleases himself in the design, he will probably etch or engrave it. In subjects of the pastoral and humorous kind, he is perhaps unrivalled by any artist living. He fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his females, and his colouring is *sombre*, otherwise his paintings and drawings would be in greater request.

I like the music of the *Sutor's dochter*, and will consider whether it shall be added to the last volume; your verses to it are pretty; but your humorous English song to suit *Jo Janet*, is inimitable. What think you of the air, *Within a mile of Edinburgh?* It has always struck me as a modern English imitation, but it is said to be Oswald's, and is so much liked, that I believe I must include it. The verses are little better than

* A letter to Mr. Cunningham, to be found in *General Correspondence*.

namby pamby. Do you consider it worth a stanza or two?

No. LI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

My dear sir, *May*, 1794.

I return you the plates, with which I am highly pleased; I would humbly propose, instead of the younker knitting stockings, to put a stock and horn into his hands. A friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the *burin*, is quite charmed with Allan's manner. I got him a peep of the Gentle Shepherd; and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr. Allan's chusing my favourite poem for his subject, to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, *I shall be quite in song*, as you shall see by and bye. I got an air, pretty enough, composed by lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, which she calls *The banks of Cree*. Cree is a beautiful romantic stream: and as her ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it.

. . . . . .

BANKS OF CREE.

Here is the glen, and here the bower,
All underneath the birchen shade;
The village-bell has told the hour,
O what can stay my lovely maid?

'Tis not Maria's whispering call;
'Tis but the balmy-breathing gale,
Mixt with some warbler's dying fall
The dewy star of eve to hail.

It is Maria's voice I hear!
So calls the woodlark in the grove,
His little, faithful mate to cheer,
At once 'tis music—and 'tis love.

And art thou come? and art thou true?
O welcome dear to love and me!
And let us all our vows renew,
Along the flowery banks of Cree.

No. LII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

July, 1794.

Is there no news yet of Pleyel? Or is your work to be at a dead stop, until the allies set our modern Orpheus at liberty from the savage thraldom of democratic discords? Alas the day! And woe is me! That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of millions*——* * * * * * *

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued, and much-honoured friend of mine, Mr. Graham of Fintray. I wrote, on the blank side of the title page, the following address to the young lady.

. . . . . .

Here, where the Scottish muse immortal lives,
In sacred strains and tuneful numbers join'd,
Accept the gift; tho' humble he who gives,
Rich is the tribute of the grateful mind.

So may no ruffian† feeling in thy breast,
Discordant jar thy bosom-chords among;
But peace attune thy gentle soul to rest,
Or love extatic wake his seraph song.

Or pity's notes, in luxury of tears,
As modest want the tale of woe reveals;
While conscious virtue all the strain endears,
And heaven-born piety her sanction seals.

No. LIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My dear sir, *Edinburgh*, 10*th August*, 1794.

I owe you an apology for having so long delayed to acknowledge the favour of your last. I fear it will be as you say, I shall have no more songs from Pleyel till France and we are friends; but nevertheless, I am very desirous to be prepared with the poetry, and as the season approaches in which your muse of Coila visits you, I trust I shall as formerly be frequently gratified with the result of your amorous and tender interviews.

No. LIV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

30*th August*, 1794.

The last evening as I was straying out, and thinking of *O'er the hills and far away*, I spun the following stanza for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store like the precious thread of the silk-worm, or brushed to the devil like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it at first; but I own that now, it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor songs, but, as far as I at present recollect, they

* A portion of this letter has been left out, for reasons that will be easily imagined. E.

† It were to have been wished that, instead of *ruffian feeling*, the bard had used a less ragged epithet, e. g. *ruder*. E.

are mostly the effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his love-lorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—*Sweet Annie frae the Sea-beach came.* Now for the song.

ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY.

Tune—"*O'er the Hills, &c.*"

How can my poor heart be glad,
When absent from my sailor lad!
How can I the thought forego,
He's on the seas to meet the foe!
Let me wander, let me rove,
Still my heart is with my love;
Nightly dreams and thoughts by day
Are with him that's far away.

CHORUS.

On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
Nightly dreams and thoughts by day
Are aye with him that's far away.

When in summer's noon I faint,
As weary flocks around me pant,
Haply in this scorching sun
My sailor's thund'ring at his gun:
Bullets, spare my only joy!
Bullets, spare my darling boy!
Fate, do with me what you may,
Spare but him that's far away!
On the seas, &c.

At the starless midnight hour,
When winter rules with boundless power;
As the storms the forest tear,
And thunders rend the howling air,
Listening to the doubling roar
Surging on the rocky shore,
All I can—I weep and pray,
For his weal that's far away.
On the seas, &c.

Peace, thy olive wand extend,
And bid wild war his ravage end,
Man with brother man to meet,
And as a brother kindly greet:
Then may heaven with prosp'rous gales
Fill my sailor's welcome sails,
To my arms their charge convey,
My dear lad that's far away.
On the seas, &c.

. . . . . .

I give you leave to abuse this song, but do it in the spirit of Christian meekness.

No. LV.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My dear sir, *Edinburgh, 16th Sept.* 1794.

You have anticipated my opinion of *On the seas and far away*; I do not think it one of your very happy productions, though it certainly contains stanzas that are worthy of all acceptation.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly "Bullets spare my only joy." Confound the bullets. It might perhaps be objected to the third verse, "At the starless midnight hour," that it has too much grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of thought would have better suited the character of a sailor's sweetheart. The tune, it must be remembered, is of the brisk cheerful kind. Upon the whole, therefore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first and last verses, with the chorusses.

No. LVI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

Sept. 1794.

I shall withdraw my *On the seas and far away*, altogether: it is unequal, and unworthy the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son: you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world and try him.

For that reason I send you the offspring of my brain, *abortions* and all; and as such, pray look over them, and forgive them, and burn them*. I am flattered at your adopting *Ca' the yowes to the knowes*, as it was owing to me that it ever saw the light. About seven years ago I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr. Clunzie, who sung it charmingly; and, at my request, Mr. Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song, and mended others, but still it will not do for you. In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head.

. . . . . .

CHORUS.

Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them whare the heather growes,
Ca' them whare the burnie rowes,
My bonie dearie.

Hark, the mavis' evening sang
Sounding Clouden's woods amang†;
Then a faulding let us gang,
My bonie dearie.
Ca' the, &c.

---

* This Virgilian order of the poet, should, I think, be disobeyed with respect to the song in question, the second stanza excepted. *Note by Mr. Thomson.*

Doctors differ. The objection to the second stanza does not strike the editor. E.

† The river Clouden, or Cluden, a tributary stream to the Nith. E.

We'll gae down by Clouden side,
Thro' the hazels spreading wide,
O'er the waves, that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly.
Ca' the, &c.

Yonder Clouden's silent towers,
Where at moonshine midnight hours,
O'er the dewy bending flowers,
Fairies dance sae cheary.
Ca' the, &c.

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear;
Thou'rt to love and heaven sae dear,
Nocht of ill may come thee near,
My bonie dearie.
Ca' the, &c.

Fair and lovely as thou art,
Thou has stown my very heart;
I can die—but canna part,
My bonie dearie.
Ca' the, &c.

. . . . . .

I shall give you my opinion of your other newly adopted songs, my first scribbling fit.

No. LVII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

September, 1794.

Do you know a blackguard Irish song, called *Onagh's waterfall?* The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses to it. It is too much, at least for my humble rustic muse, to expect that every effort of hers shall have merit: still I think that it is better to have mediocre verses to a favourite air, than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the Scots Musical Museum, and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song, to the air above mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it that you can sing before ladies.

SHE SAYS SHE LO'ES ME BEST OF A'.

Tune—"*Onagh's Waterfall.*"

Sae flaxen were her ringlets,
Her eyebrows of a darker hue,
Bewitchingly o'er-arching
Twa laughing een o' bonnie blue.
Her smiling sae wyling,
Wad make a wretch forget his woe;
What pleasure, what treasure,
Unto these rosy lips to grow:
Such was my Chloris' bonnie face,
When first her bonnie face I saw,
And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,
She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Like harmony her motion;
Her pretty ancle is a spy
Betraying fair proportion,
Wad make a saint forget the sky.
Sae warming, sae charming,
Her faultless form and graceful' air;
Ilka feature—auld nature
Declar'd that she could do nae mair:
Her's are the willing chains o' love,
By conquering beauty's sovereign law;
And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,
She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Let others love the city,
And gaudy show at sunny noon;
Gie me the lonely valley,
The dewy eve, and rising moon
Fair beaming, and streaming,
Her silver light the boughs amang;
While falling, recalling,
The amorous thrush concludes his sang:
There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove
By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
And hear my vows o' truth and love,
And say thou lo'es me best of a'.

. . . . . .

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederic of Prussia's taste in painting: we are told that he frequently admired what the connoisseurs decried, and always, without any hypocrisy, confessed his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, because people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in my favourite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where you and other judges would probably be showing disgust. For instance, I am just now making verses for *Rothemurche's Rant*, an air which puts me in raptures; and in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune, I never can make verses to it. Here I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I will pit against any of you. *Rothemurche*, he says, is an air both original and beautiful; and on his recommendation I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth or last part for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music*.

I have begun anew, *Let me in this ae night.* Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the *denouë-*

* In the original follow here two stanzas of a song, beginning, "Lassie wi' the lint-white locks;" which will be found at full length afterwards, pa. 128. E.

ment to be successful or otherwise? should she "let him in" or not?

Did you not once propose *The Sow's tail to Geordie*, as an air for your work? I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge that is no mark of its real excellence. I once set about verses for it, which I meant to be in the alternate way of a lover and his mistress chanting together. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Thomson's Christian name, and yours I am afraid is rather burlesque for sentiment, else I had meant to have made you the hero and heroine of the little piece.

How do you like the following epigram, which I wrote the other day, on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever? Doctor Maxwell was the physician who seemingly saved her from the grave; and to him I address the following.

. . . . . .

To Dr. Maxwell, on Miss Jessy Staig's recovery.

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny:
You save fair Jessy from the grave!
An angel could not die.

God grant you patience with this stupid epistle!

No. LVIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

I perceive the sprightly muse is now attendant upon her favourite poet, whose *wood-notes wild* are become as enchanting as ever. *She says she lo'es me best of a'*, is one of the pleasantest table songs I have seen, and henceforth shall be mine when the song is going round. I'll give Cunningham a copy; he can more powerfully proclaim its merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the strathspey music; on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the strathspeys, when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs, in the same way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman, without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having the *Sow's tail*, particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. Geordy, as you observe, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs. Thomson's name (Katharine) is not at all poetical. Retain Jeanie, therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your *Ca' the ewes*, is a precious little morceau. Indeed I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your fancy. Here let me ask you, whether you never seriously turned your thoughts upon dramatic writing? That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendour. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas: few or none of those which have appeared since the *Duenna*, possess much poetical merit: there is little in the conduct of the fable, or in the dialogue, to interest the audience. They are chiefly vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs of course would be to our favourite Scottish airs; the rest might be left to the London composer—Storace for Drury Lane, or Shield for Covent Garden; both of them very able and popular musicians. I believe that interest and manœuvring are often necessary to have a drama brought on: so it may be with the namby pamby tribe of flowery scribblers; but were you to address Mr. Sheridan himself, by letter, and send him a dramatic piece, I am persuaded he would, for the honour of genius, give it a fair and candid trial. Excuse me for obtruding these hints upon your consideration*.

No. LIX.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 14th October, 1794.

The last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered, till I am half blind and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added, are inclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are in general elegant and beautiful. Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published by Mr. Ritson, an Englishman? I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but does not decide the question as to the origin of our melodies; though he shows clearly that Mr. Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothesis he wished to establish; and that his classification of the airs according to the æras when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, esq. he has no mercy; but consigns him to damnation! He snarls at my publication, on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it; uncandidly and unjustly leaving it to be inferred, that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a packing to make room for Peter's! Of you he speaks with some respect, but gives you a passing hit or two, for daring to dress up a little, some old foolish songs for the Museum. His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities: many of them, however, have such a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognize the features of our favourites. By going to the oldest

* Our bard had before received the same advice, and certainly took it so far into consideration, as to have cast about for a subject. E.

collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed: and as different persons sing the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so even supposing the first collectors to have possessed the industry, the taste and discernment to chuse the best they could hear (which is far from certain), still it must evidently be a chance, whether the collections exhibit any of the melodies in the state they were first composed. In selecting the melodies for my own collection, I have been as much guided by the living as by the dead. Where these differed, I preferred the sets that appeared to me the most simple and beautiful, and the most generally approved: and without meaning any compliment to my own capability of chusing, or speaking of the pains I have taken, I flatter myself that my sets will be found equally freed from vulgar errors on the one hand, and affected graces on the other.

No. LX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

My dear friend, 19*th October*, 1794.

By this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall, at more leisure, give you a critique on the whole. Clarke goes to your town by to-day's fly, and I wish you would call on him and take his opinion in general: you know his taste is a standard. He will return here again in a week or two; so, please do not miss asking for him. One thing I hope he will do, persuade you to adopt my favourite, *Craigieburnwood*, in your selection: it is as great a favourite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made, is one of the finest women in Scotland; and in fact (*entre nous*) is in a manner to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now don't put any of your squinting construetions on this, or have any clishmaclaiver about it among our acquaintances.) I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos, equal to the genius of your book?—no! no!—Whenever I want to be more than ordinary *in song*; to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs; do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one, that, for his own use, was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile, the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to business; if you like my idea of *When she cam ben she bobbit*, the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly when set to another air, may perhaps do instead of worse stanzas.

SAW YE MY PHELY.

(Quasi dicat Phillis.)

Tune—"*When she cam ben she bobbit.*"

O saw ye my dear, my Phely?
O saw ye my dear, my Phely?
She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new love,
She winna come hame to her Willy.

What says she, my dearest, my Phely?
What says she, my dearest, my Phely?
She lets thee to wit that she has thee forgot,
And for ever disowns thee her Willy.

O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!
O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!
As light as the air, and fause as thou's fair,
Thou's broken the heart o' thy Willy.

. . . . . .

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. *The Posie* (in the Museum) is my composition; the air was taken down from Mr. Burns' voice*. It is well known in the west country, but the old words are trash. By the bye, take a look at the tune again, and tell me if you do not think it is the original from which *Roslin Castle* is composed. The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. *Strathallan's Lament* is mine: the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well-beloved Allan Masterton. *Donochthead* is not mine: I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the Edinburgh Herald; and came to the editor of that paper with the Newcastle post-mark on it†. *Whistle o'er the lave*

* *The Posie* will be found afterwards. This, and the other poems of which he speaks, had appeared in Johnson's Museum, and Mr. T. had enquired whether they were our bard's. E.

† The reader will be curious to see this poem, so highly praised by Burns. Here it is:

Keen blaws the wind o'er Donocht-head, (*a*)
The snaw drives snelly thro' the dale,
The Gaber-lunzie tirls my sneck,
And shivering tells his waefu' tale.
"Cauld is the night, O let me in,
And dinna let your minstrel fa',
And dinna let his winding sheet
Be naething but a wreath o' snaw.

"Full ninety winters hae I seen,
And pip'd where gor-cocks whirring flew.
* * * * * * *

(*a*) A mountain in the north. E.

o't is mine: the music said to be by a John Bruce, a celebrated violin player, in Dumfries, about the beginning of this century. This I know, Bruce, who was an honest man, though a red-wud Highlandman, constantly claimed it; and by all the old musical people here is believed to be the author of it.

Andrew and his cutty gun. The song to which this is set in the Museum, is mine; and was composed on Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintrose, commonly and deservedly called the Flower of Strathmore.

How long and dreary is the night. I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged; and to please you, and to suit your favourite air, I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page.

. . . . . .

Tune—"*Cauld kail in Aberdeen.*"

How lang and dreary is the night,
When I am frae my dearie;
I restless lie frae e'en to morn,
Though I were ne'er sae weary.

CHORUS.

For oh, her lanely nights are lang;
And oh, her dreams are eerie;
And oh, her widow'd heart is sair,
That's absent frae her dearie.

When I think on the lightsome days
I spent wi' thee, my dearie·
And now what seas between us roar,
How can I be but eerie!
For oh, &c.

How slow ye move, ye heavy hours!
The joyless day how dreary!
It was na sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie.
For oh, &c.

. . . . . .

Tell me how you like this. I differ from your idea of the expression of the tune. There is, to me, a great deal of tenderness in it. You cannot, in my opinion, dispense with a bass to your addenda airs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer, plays and sings at the same time, so charmingly, that I shall never bear to see any of her songs sent into the world, as naked as Mr. What-d'ye-call-um has done in his London collection*.

These English songs gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. I have been at *Duncan Gray*, to dress it in English, but all I can do, is deplorably stupid. For instance:

. . . . . .

Tune—"*Duncan Gray.*"

Let not woman e'er complain
Of inconstancy in love;
Let not woman e'er complain,
Fickle man is apt to rove;

Look abroad through nature's range,
Nature's mighty law is change;
Ladies, would it not be strange,
Man should then a monster prove?

Mark the winds, and mark the skies;
Ocean's ebb, and ocean's flow:
Sun and moon but set to rise,
Round and round the seasons go:

Why then ask of silly man,
To oppose great nature's plan?
We'll be constant while we can—
You can be no more, you know.

. . . . . .

Since the above, I have been out in the country taking a dinner with a friend, where I met with the lady whom I mentioned in the second page of this odds-and-ends of a letter. As usual, I got *into song*; and returning home, I composed the following:

. . . . . .

The Lover's morning salute to his Mistress.

Tune—"*Deil tak the wars.*"

Sleep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fairest creature;
Rosy morn now lifts his eye,

And mony a day I've dane'd, I ween,
To lilts which from my drone I blew."
My Eppie wak'd, and soon she cry'd,
'Get up, gudeman, and let him in;
For weel ye ken the winter night
Was short when he began his din.'

My Eppie's voice, O wow it's sweet,
Even tho' she bans and scaulds a wee;
But when it's tun'd to sorrow's tale,
O, haith, it's doubly dear to me.
Come in, auld carl, I'll steer my fire,
I'll make it bleeze a bonnie flame;
Your bluid is thin, ye've tint the gate,
Ye should na stray sae far frae hame.

"Nae hame have I," the minstrel said,
"Sad party-strife o'erturn'd my ha';
And, weeping at the eve of life,
I wander thro' a wreath o' snaw."

* * * * * *

This affecting poem is apparently incomplete. The author need not be ashamed to own himself. It is worthy of Burns, or of Macneill. E.

* Mr. Ritson. E.

Numbering ilka bud which nature
Waters wi' the tears o' joy:
Now through the leafy woods,
And by the reeking floods,
Wild nature's tenants, freely, gladly stray;
The lintwhite in his bower
Chants, o'er the breathing flower;
The lav'rock to the sky
Ascends wi' sangs o' joy,
While the sun and thou arise to bless the day*.

Phœbus, gilding the brow o' morning,
Banishes ilk darksome shade,
Nature gladdening and adorning;
Such to me my lovely maid.
When absent frae my fair,
The murky shades o' care
With starless gloom o'ercast my sullen sky;
But when, in beauty's light,
She meets my ravish'd sight,
When through my very heart
Her beaming glories dart;
'Tis then I wake to life, to light and joy†.

. . . . . .

If you honour my verses by setting the air to them, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood.

I inclose you a musical curiosity, an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scottish one. I know the authenticity of it, as the gentleman who brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the Musical Museum. Here follow the verses I intend for it.

. . . . . .

THE AULD MAN.

But lately seen in gladsome green
The woods rejoic'd the day,
Thro' gentle showers the laughing flowers
In double pride were gay:
But now our joys are fled,
On winter blasts awa!

Yet maiden May, in rich array,
Again shall bring them a'.

But my white pow, nae kindly thowe
Shall melt the snaws of age;
My trunk of eild, but buss or beild,
Sinks in time's wintry rage.
Oh, age has weary days,
And nights o' sleepless pain!
Thou golden time o' youthfu' prime,
Why com'st thou not again!

. . . . . .

I would be obliged to you if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs, which you mention in your letter. I will thank you for another information, and that as speedily as you please: Whether this miserable drawling hotch-potch epistle has not completely tired you of my correspondence?

---

* *Variation.* Now to the streaming fountain,
Or up the heathy mountain
The hart, hind, and roe freely, wildly-wanton stray;
In twining hazel bowers
His lay the linnet pours;
The lav'rock, &c. E.

† *Variation.* When frae my Chloris parted,
Sad, cheerless, broken-hearted,
Then night's gloomy shades, cloudy, dark, o'ercast my sky:
But when she charms my sight,
In pride of beauty's light;
When thro' my very heart
Her beaming glories dart;
'Tis then, 'tis then I wake to life and joy.
E.

No. LXI.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 27th October, 1794.

I am sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet can no more exist without his mistress than his meat. I wish I knew the adorable she, whose bright eyes and witching smiles have so often enraptured the Scottish bard! that I might drink her sweet health when the toast is going round. *Craigie-burn-wood*, must certainly be adopted into my family, since *she* is the object of the song; but in the name of decency I must beg a new chorus verse from you. *O to be lying beyond thee dearie*, is perhaps a consummation to be wished, but will not do for singing in the company of ladies. The songs in your last will do you lasting credit, and suit the respective airs charmingly. I am perfectly of your opinion, with respect to the additional airs. The idea of sending them into the world naked as they were born, was ungenerous. They must all be clothed and made decent by our friend Clarke.

I find I am anticipated by the friendly Cunningham in sending you Ritson's Scottish collection. Permit me, therefore, to present you with his English collection, which you will receive by the coach. I do not find his historical essay on Scottish song interesting. Your anecdotes and miscellaneous remarks will, I am sure, be much more so. Allan has just sketched a charming design from Maggie Lauder. She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee. I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson's prints.

P. S. Pray what do your anecdotes say concerning *Maggie Lauder?* was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely *spier for her if you ca'ed at Anstruther town.*

No. LXII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

November, 1794.

Many thanks to you, my dear sir, for your present: it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c. for your work. I intend drawing it up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c. it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end; which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work*. In my last, I told you my objections to the song you had selected for *My lodging is on the cold ground*. On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the poetic name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration) she suggested an idea, which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song.

. . . . . .

My Chloris, mark how green the groves,
The primrose banks how fair:
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy flaxen hair.

The lav'rock shuns the palace gay,
And o'er the cottage sings:
For nature smiles as sweet, I ween,
To shepherds as to kings.

Let minstrels sweep the skilfu' string
In lordly lighted ha':
The shepherd stops his simple reed,
Blithe, in the birken shaw.

The princely revel may survey
Our rustic dance wi' scorn;
But are their hearts as light as ours
Beneath the milk-white thorn?

The shepherd, in the flowery glen,
In shepherd's phrase will woo:
The courtier tells a finer tale,
But is his heart as true?

These wild-wood flowers I've pu'd, to deck
That spotless breast o' thine:
The courtier's gems may witness love—
But 'tis na love like mine.

. . . . . .

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral? I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of *Ma chere Amie*. I assure you, I was never more in earnest in my life, than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last.—Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel, and highly venerate; but, somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy, as that other species of the passion,

"Where Love is liberty, and Nature law."

Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet; while the last has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul. Still, I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object, is the first and inviolate sentiment that pervades my soul; and whatever pleasures I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price; and justice forbids, and generosity disdains the purchase! * * * * * * *

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections, to pick out songs of which the measure is something similar to what I want; and, with a little alteration, so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song, which, under the same first verse, you will find in Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany, I have cut down for an English dress to your "*Daintie Davie*," as follows.

. . . . . .

SONG,

Altered from an old English one.

It was the charming month of May,
When all the flow'rs were fresh and gay,
One morning, by the break of day,
The youthful, charming Chloe

From peaceful slumber she arose,
Gi't on her mantle and her hose,
And o'er the flowery mead she goes,
The youthful, charming Chloe.

CHORUS.

Lovely was she by the dawn,
Youthful Chloe, charming Chloe,
Tripping o'er the pearly lawn,
The youthful, charming Chloe.

The feather'd people you might see
Perch'd all around on every tree;
In notes of sweetest melody
They hail the charming Chloe;

'Till, painting gay the eastern skies,
The glorious sun began to rise,
Out-rivall'd by the radiant eyes
Of youthful, charming Chloe.
Lovely was she, &c.

* It does not appear whether Burns completed these anecdotes, &c. Something of the kind (probably the rude draughts) was found amongst his papers, and appears in *General Correspondence*.
E.

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it. I have finished my song to *Rothemurche's Rant;* and you have Clarke to consult, as to the set of the air for singing.

. . . . . .

LASSIE WI' THE LINT-WHITE LOCKS.

Tune—"*Rothemurche's Rant.*"

CHORUS.

Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonnie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks,
Wilt thou be my dearie O?

Now nature cleeds the flowery lea,
And a' is young and sweet like thee;
O wilt thou share its joy wi' me,
And say thou'lt be my dearie O?
Lassie wi', &c.

And when the welcome simmer-shower
Has chear'd ilk drooping little flower,
We'll to the breathing woodbine bower
At sultry noon, my dearie O.
Lassie wi', &c.

When Cynthia lights, wi' silver ray,
The weary shearer's hameward way;
Thro' yellow waving fields we'll stray,
And talk o' love, my dearie O.
Lassie wi', &c.

And when the howling wintry blast
Disturbs my lassie's midnight rest;
Enclasped to my faithfu' breast,
I'll comfort thee, my dearie O*.

Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,
Bonie lassie, artless lassie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks,
Wilt thou be my dearie O?

. . . . . .

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded. If you like it, well: if not, I will insert it in the Museum.

I am out of temper that you should set so sweet, so tender an air, as *Deil tak the wars,* to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of, *Saw ye my father:* by heavens, the odds is, gold to brass! Besides, the old song, though now pretty well modernized into the Scottish language, is, originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scottish manner, by that genius Tom D'Urfey; so has no pretensions to be a Scottish production. There is a pretty English song by Sheridan in the *Duenna,* to this air, which is out of sight superior to D'Urfey's. It begins,

"When sable night each drooping plant restoring."

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of simplicity, tenderness, and love. I have again gone over my song to the tune as follows*.

Now for my English song to *Nancy's to the Greenwood, &c.*

. . . . . .

Farewell, thou stream that winding flows
Around Eliza's dwelling!
O mem'ry! spare the cruel throes
Within my bosom swelling:
Condemn'd to drag a hopeless chain
And yet in secret languish,
To feel a fire in every vein,
Nor dare disclose my anguish.

Love's veriest wretch, unseen, unknown,
I fain my griefs would cover:
The bursting sigh, th' unweeting groan,
Betray the hapless lover.
I know thou doom'st me to despair,
Nor wilt, nor canst relieve me;
But oh, Eliza, hear one prayer,
For pity's sake forgive me.

The music of thy voice I heard,
Nor wist while it enslav'd me;
I saw thine eyes yet nothing fear'd,
'Till fears no more had sav'd me.
The unwary sailor thus aghast,
The wheeling torrent viewing;
'Mid circling horrors sinks at last
In overwhelming ruin.

. . . . . .

There is an air, *The Caledonian hunt's delight,* to which I wrote a song that you will find in Johnson. *Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon;* this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as Lear says of his knights. Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr. James Miller, writer in your good town, a gentleman whom possibly you know, was in company with our friend Clarke; and talking of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr. Clarke, partly by way of joke, told him to

* In some of the MSS. this stanza runs thus:

And should the howling wintry blast
Disturb my lassie's midnight rest,
I'll fauld thee to my faithfu' breast,
And comfort thee, my dearie O. E.

* See the song in its first and best dress, in page 125. Our bard remarks upon it, "I could easily throw this into an English mould; but, to my taste, in the simple and the tender of the pastoral song, a sprinkling of the old Scottish has an inimitable effect." E.

keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm; and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certain it is, that in a few days Mr. Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr. Clarke, with some touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question. Ritson, you know, has the same story of the *black keys;* but this account which I have just given you, Mr. Clarke informed me of, several years ago. Now, to shew you how difficult it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that this was an Irish air; nay I met with an Irish gentleman who affirmed he had heard it in Ireland among the old women; while, on the other hand, a countess informed me, that the first person who introduced the air into this country, was a baronet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the notes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man. How difficult then to ascertain the truth, respecting our poesy and music! I, myself, have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time I had ever seen them.

I thank you for admitting *Craigie-burn-wood;* and I shall take care to furnish you with a new chorus. In fact, the chorus was not my work, but a part of some old verses to the air. If I can catch myself in a more than ordinarily propitious moment, I shall write a new *Craigie-burn-wood* altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request; 'tis dunning your generosity; but in a moment, when I had forgotten whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this; but an ungracious request is doubly so, by a tedious apology. To make you some amends, as soon as I have extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done, for when I am in a scribbling humour, I know not when to give over.

No. LXIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My good sir, *15th November*, 1794.

Since receiving your last, I have had another interview with Mr. Clarke, and a long consultation. He thinks the *Caledonian hunt* is more Bacchanalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends it to you to match the air accordingly. Pray did it ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish airs are adapted for verses in the form of a dialogue? The first part of the air is generally low, and suited for a man's voice; and the second part, in many instances, cannot be sung, at concert pitch, but by a female voice. A song thus performed makes an agreeable variety, but few of ours are written in this form: I wish you would think of it in some of those that remain. The only one of the kind you have sent me, is admirable, and will be an universal favourite.

Your verses for *Rothemurche* are so sweetly pastoral, and your serenade to Chloris, for *Deil tak the wars*, so passionately tender, that I have sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for *My lodging is on the cold ground*, is likewise a diamond of the first water; I am quite dazzled and delighted by it. Some of your Chlorises I suppose have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this colour; else we differ about it; for I should scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white locks!

Farewell thou stream that winding flows, I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after *Nancy:* at least it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for *Dainty Davie*, will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes: I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that any thing from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you not to use ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs: the next carrier will bring you three copies, and you are as welcome to twenty, as to a pinch of snuff.

No. LXIV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

19th November, 1794.

You see, my dear sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though indeed you may thank yourself for the *tedium* of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favourite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast, I finished my duet which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded, I will not say; but here it is for you, though it is not an hour old.

. . . . . .

Tune—"*The Sow's Tail.*"

HE.

O Philly, happy be that day
When, roving through the gather'd hay,
My youthfu' heart was stown away,
And by thy charms, my Philly.

SHE.

O Willy, aye I bless the grove
Where first I own'd my maiden love,
Whilst thou didst pledge the powers above
To be my ain dear Willy.

HE.

As songsters of the early year
Are ilka day mair sweet to hear,
So ilka day to me mair dear
And charming is my Philly.

SHE.

As on the brier the budding rose
Still richer breathes and fairer blows,
So in my tender bosom grows
The love I bear my Willy.

HE.

The milder sun and bluer sky,
That crown my harvest cares wi' joy,
Were ne'er sae welcome to my eye
As is a sight o' Philly.

SHE.

The little swallow's wanton wing,
Tho' wafting o'er the flowery spring,
Did ne'er to me sic tidings bring,
As meeting o' my Willy.

HE.

The bee that thro' the sunny hour
Sips nectar in the opening flower,
Compar'd wi' my delight is poor,
Upon the lips o' Philly.

SHE.

The woodbine in the dewy weet,
When evening shades in silence meet,
Is nocht sae fragrant or sae sweet
As is a kiss o' Willy.

HE.

Let fortune's wheel at random rin,
And fools may tyne, and knaves may win;
My thoughts are a' bound up in ane,
And that's my ain dear Philly.

SHE.

What's a' the joys that gowd can gie!
I care na wealth a single flie;
The lad I love's the lad for me,
And that's my ain dear Willy.

. . . . . .

Tell me honestly how you like it; and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain, I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name, Philly; but it is the common abbreviation of Phillis. Sally, the only other name that suits, has, to my ear, a vulgarity about it, which unfits it for any thing except burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother editor, Mr. Ritson, ranks with me, as my coevals, have always mistaken vulgarity for simplicity: whereas, simplicity is as much *eloignée* from vulgarity, on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit, on the other.

I agree with you as to the air, *Craigie-burn-wood*, that a chorus would in some degree spoil the effect; and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not however a case in point with *Rothemurche;* there, as in *Roy's wife of Aldivaloch*, a chorus goes, to my taste, well enough. As to the chorus going first, that is the case with *Roy's wife*, as well as *Rothemurche*. In fact, in the first part of both tunes, the rhythm is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humour the verse accordingly. Leaving out the starting note, in both tunes, has, I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of.

Try, } O Roy's wife of Aldivaloch.
} O lassie wi' the lint-white locks.

and

Compare with, } *Roy's* wife of Aldivaloch.
} *Lassie* wi' the lint-white locks.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the last case, with the true furor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas, in the first insipid method, it is like the grating screw of the pins before the fiddle is brought into tune. This is my taste; if I am wrong I beg pardon of the *cognoscenti.*

The Caledonian hunt is so charming, that it would make any subject, in a song, go down; but pathos is certainly its native tongue. Scottish Bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, *Todlin hame* is, for wit and humour, an unparalleled composition; and *Andrew and his cutty gun* is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heart-ach. Apropos to Bacchanalian songs in Scottish; I composed one yesterday, for an air I like much—*Lumps o' pudding.*

. . . . . .

Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,
Whene'er I forgather wi' sorrow and care,
I gie them a skelp, as they're creepin alang,
Wi' a cog o' gude swats, and an auld Scottish sang.

I whyles claw the elbow o' troublesome thought;
But man is a soger, and life is a faught:
My mirth and gude humour are coin in my pouch,
And my freedom's my lairdship nae monarch dare touch.

A towmond o' trouble, should that be my fa',
A night o' gude fellowship sowthers it a':
When at the blythe end of our journey at last,
Wha the deil ever thinks o' the road he has past?

Blind chance, let her snapper and styte on her way;
Be't to me, be't frae me, e'en let the jade gae:
Come ease, or come travail; come pleasure, or pain;
My warst word is—"Welcome and welcome again!"

If you do not relish the air, I will send it to Johnson.

Since yesterday's penmanship, I have framed a couple of English stanzas, by way of an English song to *Roy's Wife*. You will allow me that in this instance, my English corresponds in sentiment with the Scottish.

. . . . . .

Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?

Tune—"*Roy's Wife.*"

CHORUS.

Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy?
Well thou know'st my aching heart,
And canst thou leave me thus for pity?

Is this thy plighted, fond regard,
Thus cruelly to part, my Katy?
Is this thy faithful swain's reward—
An aching, broken heart, my Katy?
Canst thou, &c.

Farewell! and ne'er such sorrows tear
That fickle heart of thine, my Katy!
Thou may'st find those will love thee dear—
But not a love like mine, my Katy.
*Canst thou, &c.**

. . . . . .

* To this address in the character of a forsaken lover, a reply was found on the part of the lady, among the MSS. of our bard, evidently in a female hand-writing; which is doubtless that referred to in p. 113 of this volume. The temptation to give it to the public, is irresistible; and if, in so doing, offence should be given to the fair authoress, the beauty of her verses must plead our excuse.

Tune—"*Roy's wife.*"

CHORUS.

Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
For, ah, thou knowst na' every pang
Wad wring my bosom shouldst thou leave me.

Tell me that thou yet art true,
And a' my wrongs shall be forgiven,
And when this heart proves fause to thee,
Yon sun shall cease its course in heaven.
Stay, my Willie, &c.

But to think I was betrayed,
That falsehood e'er our loves should sunder!
To take the flow'ret to my breast,
And find the guilefu' serpent under.
Stay, my Willie, &c.

Could I hope thou'dst ne'er deceive,
Celestial pleasures might I choose 'em,
I'd slight, nor seek in other spheres
That heaven I'd find within thy bosom.
Stay, my Willie, &c.

Well! I think this, to be done in two or three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish blackguard, is not so far amiss. You see, I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Tell my friend Allan (for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another, to be the best friends on earth) that I much suspect he has, in his plates, mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have, at last, gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument. It is composed of three parts: the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton-ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn, cut off at the smaller end, until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn, until it be held by the thicker end of the thigh-bone; and lastly, an oaten-reed exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd-boy have, when the corn stems are green and full grown. The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the smaller end of the stock; while the stock, with the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventiges on the upper side, and one backventige, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds wont to use in that country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or else we have not the art of blowing it rightly; for we can make little of it. If Mr. Allan chooses, I will send him a sight of mine; as I look on myself to be a kind of brother-brush with him. "Pride in poets is nae sin," and I will say it, that I look on Mr. Allan and Mr. Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world.

No. LXV.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

28*th November*, 1794.

I acknowledge, my dear sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable, correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you, never entered my head; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my impudence, in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which perhaps if you had served me right, you would have sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have all along condescended to invite my criticism with so much courtesy, that it ceases to be wonderful, if I have sometimes given myself the airs of a reviewer. Your last budget demands unqualified praise: all

It may amuse the reader to be told, that on this occasion the gentleman and lady have exchanged the dialects of their respective countries. The Scottish bard makes his address in pure English: the reply on the part of the lady, in the Scottish dialect, is, if we mistake not, by a young and beautiful Englishwoman. E.

the songs are charming, but the duet is a *chef d'œuvre*. *Lumps of pudding* shall certainly make one of my family dishes: you have cooked it so capitally, that it will please all palates. Do give us a few more of this cast, when you find yourself in good spirits: these convivial songs are more wanted than those of the amorous kind, of which we have great choice. Besides, one does not often meet with a singer capable of giving the proper effect to the latter, while the former are easily sung, and acceptable to every body. I participate in your regret that the authors of some of our best songs are unknown: it is provoking to every admirer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your beautiful ballad, *The Soldier's Return*, to be engraved for one of my frontispieces. The most interesting point of time appears to me, when she first recognizes her ain dear Willy, "She gaz'd, she redden'd like a rose." The three lines immediately following, are no doubt more impressive on the reader's feelings, but were the painter to fix on these, then you'll observe the animation and anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he could only represent her fainting in the soldier's arms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg your opinion.

Allan desires me to thank you for your accurate description of the stock and horn, and for the very gratifying compliment you pay him, in considering him worthy of standing in a niche by the side of Burns, in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen the rude instrument you describe, so does not want you to send it; but wishes to know whether you believe it to have ever been generally used as a musical pipe by the Scottish shepherds, and when, and in what part of the country chiefly. I doubt much if it was capable of any thing but routing and roaring. A friend of mine says he remembers to have heard one in his younger days (made of wood instead of your bone), and that the sound was abominable.

Do not, I beseech you, return any books.

No. LXVI.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

December, 1794.

It is, I assure you, the pride of my heart to do any thing to forward, or add to the value of your book: and as I agree with you that the Jacobite song, in the Museum, to *There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame*, would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love-song to that air, I have just framed for you the following:

MY NANIE'S AWA.

Tune—"*There'll never be peace, &c.*"

Now in her green mantle blythe nature arrays,
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes,
While birds warble welcome in ilka green shaw;
But to me it's delightless—my Nanie's awa.

The snaw-drap and primrose our woodlands adorn,
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn;
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
They mind me o' Nanie—and Nanie's awa.

Thou lav'rock that springs frae the dews of the lawn
The shepherd to warn o' the grey-breaking dawn,
And thou mellow mavis that hails the night-fa',
Give over for pity—my Nanie's awa.

Come autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and grey,
And soothe me wi' tidings o' nature's decay:
The dark, dreary winter, and wild-driving snaw,
Alane can delight me—now Nanie's awa.

. . . . . .

How does this please you? As to the point of time, for the expression, in your proposed print from my *Sodger's Return*: it must certainly be at —"She gaz'd." The interesting dubiety and suspense, taking possession of her countenance; and the gushing fondness, with a mixture of roguish playfulness, in his, strike me, as things of which a master will make a great deal. In great haste, but in great truth, yours.

No. LXVII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

January, 1795.

I fear for my songs; however, a few may please, yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style, disappears altogether. For these three thousand years, we, poetic folks, have been describing the spring, for instance; and as the spring continues the same, there must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c. of these said rhyming folks.

A great critic, Aikin on songs, says, that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song; but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts, inverted into rhyme.

. . . . . .

FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT.

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, and a' that;
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toils obscure, and a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin grey, and a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that:

For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, and a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts and stares, and a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
His ribband, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Gude faith he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher ranks than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree and a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
It's comin yet for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

. . . . . .

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *vive la bagatelle*: for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for *Craigie-burn-wood?*

Sweet fa's the eve on Craigie-burn,
And blythe awakes the morrow,
But a' the pride o' spring's return
Can yield me nocht but sorrow.

I see the flowers and spreading trees,
I hear the wild birds singing;
But what a weary wight can please,
And care his bosom wringing!

Fain, fain would I my griefs impart,
Yet dare na for your anger;
But secret love will break my heart,
If I conceal it langer.

If thou refuse to pity me,
If thou shalt love anither,
When yon green leaves fade frae the tree,
Around my grave they'll wither*.

Farewell! God bless you.

* Craigie-burn-wood is situated on the banks of the river Moffat, and about three miles distant from the village of that name, celebrated for its medicinal waters. The woods of Craigie-burn and of Dumcrief, were at one time favourite haunts of our poet. It was there he met the "Lassie wi' the lint-white locks," and that he conceived several of his beautiful lyrics. E.

No. LXVIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My dear sir, *Edinburgh, 30th January*, 1795.

I thank you heartily for *Nanie's awa*, as well as for *Craigie-burn*, which I think a very comely pair. Your observation on the difficulty of original writing in a number of efforts, in the same style strikes me very forcibly; and it has again and again excited my wonder to find you continually surmounting this difficulty, in the many delightful songs you have sent me. Your *vive la bagatelle* song, *For a' that*, shall undoubtedly be included in my list.

No. LXIX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

February, 1795.

Here is another trial at your favourite air.

Tune—"*Let me in this ae night.*"

O lassie, art thou sleeping yet,
Or art thou wakin, I would wit?
For love has bound me, hand and foot,
And I would fain be in, jo.

CHORUS.

O let me in this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
For pity's sake this ae night,
O rise and let me in, jo.

Thou hear'st the winter wind and weet,
Nae star blinks thro' the driving sleet;
Tak pity on my weary feet,
And shield me frae the rain, jo.
O let me in, &c.

The bitter blast that round me blaws
Unheeded howls, unheeded fa's;
The cauldness o' thy heart's the cause
Of a' my grief and pain, jo.
O let me in, &c.

. . . . . .

HER ANSWER.

O tell na me o' wind and rain,
Upbraid na me wi' cauld disdain,
Gae back the gate ye cam again,
I winna let you in, jo.

CHORUS.

I tell you now this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;

And ance for a' this ae night,
I winna let you in, jo.

The snellest blast, at mirkest hours,
That round the pathless wand'rer pours,
Is nocht to what poor she endures
That's trusted faithless man, jo.
I tell you now, &c.

The sweetest flower that deek'd the mead,
Now trodden like the vilest weed:
Let simple maid the lesson read,
The weird may be her ain, jo.
I tell you now, &c.

The bird that charm'd his summer-day,
Is now the cruel fowler's prey;
Let witless, trusting woman say
How aft her fate's the same, jo.
I tell you now, &c.

I do not know whether it will do.

No. LXX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

Ecclefechan, 7th February, 1795.

My dear Thomson,

You cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as a supervisor (in which capacity I have acted of late) I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked, little village. I have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress: I have tried to "gae back the gate I cam again," but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner, a scraper has been torturing catgut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries; or to hang myself, to get rid of them: like a prudent man (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed) I, of two evils, have chosen the least, and am very drunk, at your service*!

I wrote you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not time then to tell you all I wanted to say; and heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know it, *We'll gang nae mair to yon town?* I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye to whom I would consecrate it.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

* The bard must have been tipsy indeed, to abuse sweet Ecclefechan at this rate. E.

No. LXXI.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

25th February, 1795.

I have to thank you, my dear sir, for two epistles, one containing *Let me in this ae night;* and the other from Ecclefechan, proving, that, drunk or sober, your "mind is never muddy." You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at the same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song as it now stands, very much.

I had hopes you would be arrested some days at Ecclefechan, and be obliged to beguile the tedious forenoons by song-making. It will give me pleasure to receive the verses you intend for *O wat ye wha's in yon town.*

No. LXXII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

ADDRESS TO THE WOOD-LARK.

Tune—"*Where'll bonie Ann lie.*"

Or, "*Locheroch Side.*"

O stay, sweet warbling wood-lark stay,
Nor quit for me the trembling spray,
A hapless lover courts thy lay,
Thy soothing fond complaining.

Again, again that tender part,
That I may catch thy melting art;
For surely that wad touch her heart,
Wha kills me wi' disdaining.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd,
Sic notes o' woe could wauken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care;
O' speechless grief, and dark despair:
For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair!
Or my poor heart is broken!

Let me know, your very first leisure, how you like this song.

. . . . . .

ON CHLORIS BEING ILL.

Tune—"*Aye wakin O.*"

CHORUS.

Long, long the night,
Heavy comes the morrow,

While my soul's delight
Is on her bed of sorrow.

Can I cease to care?
Can I cease to languish,
While my darling fair
Is on the couch of anguish?
Long, &c.

Every hope is fled,
Ev'ry fear is terror;
Slumber even I dread,
Every dream is horror.
Long, &c.

Hear me, pow'rs divine!
Oh, in pity hear me!
Take aught else of mine,
But my Chloris spare me!
Long, &c.

. . . . . .

How do you like the foregoing? The Irish air, *Humours of Glen*, is a great favourite of mine, and as, except the silly stuff in the *Poor Soldier*, there are not any decent verses for it, I have written for it as follows.

SONG.

Tune—"*Humours of Glen.*"

Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume,
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom:
Far dearer to me are yon humble broom bowers,
Where the blue-bell and gowan lurk lowly unseen:
For there, lightly tripping amang the wild flowers,
A listening the linnet, aft wanders my Jean.

Tho' rich is the breeze in their gay sunny valleys,
And cauld *Caledonia's* blast on the wave;
Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud palace,
What are they? The haunt o' the tyrant and slave!
The slave's spicy forests, and gold-bubbling fountains,
The brave Caledonian views wi' disdain;
He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,
Save love's willing fetters, the chains o' his Jean.

. . . . . .

SONG.

Tune—"*Laddie lie near me.*"

'Twas na her bonie blue e'e was my ruin;
Fair tho' she be, that was ne'er my undoing:
'Twas the dear smile when naebody did mind us,
'Twas the bewitching, sweet, stown glance o' kindness.

Sair do I fear that to hope is denied me,
Sair do I fear that despair maun abide me;
But tho' fell fortune should fate us to sever,
Queen shall she be in my bosom for ever.

Mary, I'm thine wi' a passion sincerest,
And thou hast plighted me love o' the dearest!
And thou'rt the angel that never can alter,
Sooner the sun in his motion would falter.

Let me hear from you.

No. LXXIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

You must not think, my good sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my gift, when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the design and execution of the Cotter's Saturday Night, is, in my opinion, one of the happiest productions of Allan's pencil. I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember your phiz. This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs. Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feelings of admiration with which I have read your pathetic *Address to the Woodlark*, your elegant *Panegyric on Caledonia*, and your affecting verses on *Chloris's illness*. Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song to "Laddie lie near me," though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

No. LXXIV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

Altered from an old English song.

Tune—"*John Anderson my jo.*"

How cruel are the parents
Who riches only prize,
And to the wealthy booby
Poor woman sacrifice.
Meanwhile the hapless daughter
Has but a choice of strife;
To shun a tyrant father's hate,
Become a wretched wife.

The ravening hawk pursuing,
The trembling dove thus flies,
To shun impelling ruin
A while her pinions tries;
Till of escape despairing,
No shelter or retreat,
She trusts the ruthless falconer,
And drops beneath his feet.

SONG.

Tune—" *Deil tak the wars.*"

Mark yonder pomp of costly fashion,
Round the wealthy, titled bride:
But when compar'd with real passion,
Poor is all that princely pride.
What are their showy treasures?
What are their noisy pleasures?
The gay, gaudy glare of vanity and art:
The polish'd jewel's blaze,
May draw the wond'ring gaze,
And courtly grandeur bright,
The fancy may delight,
But never, never can come near the heart.

But did you see my dearest Chloris,
In simplicity's array;
Lovely as yonder sweet opening flower is,
Shrinking from the gaze of day.
O then, the heart alarming,
And all resistless charming,
In Love's delightful fetters she chains the willing soul!
Ambition would disown
The world's imperial crown,
Even Av'rice would deny
His worshipp'd deity,
And feel thro' every vein love's raptures roll.

Well! this is not amiss. You see how I answer your orders: your tailor could not be more punctual. I am just now in a high fit of poetizing, provided that the strait-jacket of criticism don't cure me. If you can in a post or two administer a little of the intoxicating potion of your applause, it will raise your humble servant's phrenzy to any height you want. I am at this moment "holding high converse" with the muses, and have not a word to throw away on such a prosaic dog as you are.

No. LXXV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

Ten thousand thanks for your elegant present; though I am ashamed of the value of it, being bestowed on a man who has not by any means merited such an instance of kindness. I have shown it to two or three judges of the first abilities here, and they all agree with me in classing it as a first-rate production. My phiz is *sae kensperkle*, that the very joiner's apprentice whom Mrs. Burns employed to break up the parcel (I was out of town that day) knew it at once. My most grateful compliments to Allan, who has honoured my rustic muse so much with his masterly pencil. One strange coincidence is, that the little one who is making the felonious attempt on the cat's tail, is the most striking likeness of an *ill-deedie, d—n'd, wee, rumble-gairie, urchin* of mine, whom, from that propensity to witty wickedness and manfu' mischief, which, even at twa days auld, I foresaw would form the striking features of his disposition, I named Willie Nicol, after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless.

Give the inclosed epigram to my much-valued friend Cunningham, and tell him that on Wednesday I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of me, in a manner introduced me—I mean a well-known military and literary character, colonel Dirom.

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

No. LXXVI.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

13*th May*, 1795.

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are all so well satisfied with Mr. Allan's production. The chance resemblance of your little fellow, whose promising disposition appeared so *very* early, and suggested whom he should be named after, is curious enough. I am acquainted with that person, who is a prodigy of learning and genius, and a pleasant fellow, though no saint.

You really make me blush when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me. I do not think I can ever repay you, or sufficiently esteem and respect you for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you. So I beg you would not make a fool of me again, by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetizing. Long may it last. Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of *William and Margaret*, and is to give it to me, to be inrolled among the elect.

No. LXXVII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

In *Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad*, the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here goes what I think is an improvement:

O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
O whistle, and I'll come to ye, my lad;
Tho' father, and mother, and a' should gae mad,
Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye, my lad.

In fact, a fair dame, at whose shrine I, the priest of the nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus; a dame whom the graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the loves have armed with lightning; a fair one, herself the heroine of the song, insists on the amendment; and dispute her commands if you dare!

. . . . . .

SONG.

Tune—"*This is no my ain house.*"

CHORUS.

O this is no my ain lassie,
Fair tho' the lassie be;
O weel ken I my ain lassie,
Kind love is in her e'e.

I see a form, I see a face,
Ye weel may wi' the fairest place:
It wants, to me, the witching grace,
The kind love that's in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

She's bonnie, blooming, straight, and tall,
And lang has had my heart in thrall;
And aye it charms my very saul,
The kind love that's in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
To steal a blink by a' unseen;
But gleg as light are lovers' een,
When kind love is in the e'e.
O this is no, &c.

It may escape the courtly sparks,
It may escape the learned clerks;
But weel the watching lover marks
The kind love that's in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

. . . . . .

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The inclosed sheet contains two songs for him, which please to present to my valued friend Cunningham.

I inclose the sheet open, both for your inspection, and that you may copy the song, *O bonnie was yon rosy brier*. I do not know whether I am right; but that song pleases me, and as it is extremely probable that Clarke's newly roused celestial spark will be soon smothered in the fogs of indolence, if you like the song, it may go as Scottish verses, to the air of *I wish my love was in a mire;* and poor Erskine's English lines may follow.

I inclose you a *For a' that, and a' that*, which was never in print: it is a much superior song to mine. I have been told that it was composed by a lady.

. . . . . .

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

SCOTTISH SONG.

Now spring has clad the grove in green,
And strew'd the lea wi' flowers:
The furrow'd, waving corn is seen
Rejoice in fostering showers;
While ilka thing in nature join
Their sorrows to forego,
O why thus all alone are mine
The weary steps of woe!

The trout within yon wimpling burn
Glides swift, a silver dart,
And safe beneath the shady thorn
Defies the angler's art:
My life was ance that careless stream,
That wanton trout was I;
But love, wi' unrelenting beam,
Has scorch'd my fountains dry.

The little flow'ret's peaceful lot,
In yonder cliff that grows,
Which, save the linnet's flight, I wot,
Nae ruder visit knows,
Was mine; till love has o'er me past,
And blighted a' my bloom,
And now beneath the with'ring blast
My youth and joy consume.

The waken'd lav'rock warbling springs,
And climbs the early sky,
Winnowing blythe her dewy wings
In morning's rosy eye;
As little reckt I sorrow's power,
Until the flowery snare
O' witching love, in luckless hour,
Made me the thrall o' care.

O had my fate been Greenland snows,
Or Afric's burning zone,
Wi' man and nature leagu'd my foes,
So Peggy ne'er I'd known!
The wretch whase doom is "hope nae mair,"[5]
What tongue his woes can tell!
Within whase bosom save despair,
Nae kinder spirits dwell.

. . . . . .

SCOTTISH SONG.

O bonnie was yon rosy brier,
That blooms sae far frae haunt o' man;
And bonnie she, and ah, how dear!
It shaded frae the e'enin sun.

Yon rosebuds in the morning dew
How pure, amang the leaves sae green;
But purer was the lover's vow
They witness'd in their shade yestreen.

All in its rude and prickly bower,
That crimson rose, how sweet and fair!
But love is far a sweeter flower
Amid life's thorny path o' care.

The pathless wild, and wimpling burn,
Wi' Chloris in my arms, be mine;
And I the world, nor wish, nor scorn,
Its joys and griefs alike resign.

Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the last edition of my poems, presented to the lady, whom, in so many fictitious reveries of passion, but with the most ardent sentiments of real friendship, I have so often sung under the name of Chloris.

'Tis friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend,
Nor thou the gift refuse,
Nor with unwilling ear attend
The moralizing muse.

Since thou, in all thy youth and charms,
Must bid the world adieu
(A world 'gainst peace in constant arms),
To join the friendly few.

Since, thy gay morn of life o'ercast,
Chill came the tempest's lour;
(And ne'er misfortune's eastern blast
Did nip a fairer flower.)

Since life's gay scenes must charm no more,
Still much is left behind;
Still nobler wealth hast thou in store,
The comforts of the mind!

Thine is the self-approving glow,
On conscious honour's part;
And, dearest gift of heaven below,
Thine friendship's truest heart;

The joys refin'd of sense and taste,
With every muse to rove:
And doubly were the poet blest
These joys could he improve.

. . . . . .

Une bagatelle de l'amitié.
Coila.

No. LXXVIII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My dear sir, *Edinburgh, 3d Aug.* 1795.

This will be delivered to you by a Dr. Brianton, who has read your works, and pants for the honour of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman, but his friend, who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptation.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours! It is superfluous to tell you, that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as with your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am sorry you should be induced to alter *O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad*, to the prosaic line, *Thy Jeany will venture wi' ye, my lad.* I must be permitted to say, that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish, therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeany, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered*.

I should be happy to see Mr. Clarke produce a few airs to be joined to your verses. Every body regrets his writing so very little, as every body acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray was the resolution formed coolly before dinner, or was it a midnight vow made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr. Cunningham what you have sent him.

P. S. The lady's *For a' that and a' that*, is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to yours than I to Hercules.

No. LXXIX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

ENGLISH SONG.

Tune—"*Let me in this ae night.*"

Forlorn, my love, no comfort near,
Far, far from thee I wander here;
Far, far from thee, the fate severe
At which I most repine, love.

CHORUS.

O wert thou, love, but near me,
But near, near, near me;
How kindly thou wouldst cheer me,
And mingle sighs with mine, love.

Around me scowls a wintry sky,
That blasts each bud of hope and joy:
And shelter, shade, nor home have I,
Save in these arms of thine, love.
O wert, &c.

Cold, alter'd friendship's cruel part,
To poison fortune's ruthless dart—
Let me not break thy faithful heart,
And say that fate is mine, love.
O wert, &c.

But dreary tho' the moments fleet,
O let me think we yet shall meet!
That only ray of solace sweet
Can on thy Chloris shine, love.
O wert, &c.

. . . . . .

How do you like the foregoing? I have written it within this hour: so much for the *speed* of my Pegasus; but what say you to his *bottom?*

* The editor, who has heard the heroine of this song sing it herself in the very spirit of arch simplicity that it requires, thinks Mr. Thomson's petition unreasonable. If we mistake not, this is the same lady who produced the lines to the tune of *Roy's Wife*, p. 131. E.

No. LXXX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

SCOTTISH BALLAD.

Tune—"*The Lothian lassie.*"

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave me;
I said there was naething I hated like men,
The deuce gae wi' m, to believe me, believe me,
The deuce gae wi' m, to believe me.

He spak o' the darts in my bonie black e'en,
And vow'd for my love he was dying;
I said he might die when he liked, for Jean,
The Lord forgie me for lying, for lying,
The Lord forgie me for lying!

A weel-stocked mailen, himsel for the laird,
And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers:
I never loot on that I kend it, or car'd,
But thought I might hae waur offers, waur offers,
But thought I might hae waur offers.

But what wad ye think? in a fortnight or less,
The deil tak his taste to gae near her!
He up the lang loan to my black cousin Bess*,
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her, could bear her,
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her.

But a' the niest week as I fretted wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,
And wha but my fine fickle lover was there!
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock.

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,
Least neebors might say I was saucy;
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

I spier'd for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,
Gin she had recover'd her hearin,
And how her new shoon fit her auld shackl't feet,
But, heavens! how he fell a swearin, a swearin,
But, heavens! how he fell a swearin.

He begged, for Gudesake! I wad be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow:
So e'en to preserve the poor body in life
I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

. . . . . .

FRAGMENT.

Tune—"*The Caledonian hunt's delight.*"

Why, why tell thy lover,
Bliss he never must enjoy;
Why, why undeceive him,
And give all his hopes the lie.

O why, while fancy, raptured, slumbers,
Chloris, Chloris all the theme,
Why, why wouldst thou cruel
Wake thy lover from his dream.

. . . . . .

Such is the peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it.

I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the tooth-ach, so have not a word to spare.

No. LXXXI.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My dear sir, *3d June*, 1795.

Your English verses to *Let me in this ae night*, are tender and beautiful; and your ballad to the "Lothian lassie" is a master-piece for its humour and naiveté. The fragment for the *Caledonian hunt* is quite suited to the original measure of the air, and, as it plagues you so, the fragment must content it. I would rather, as I said before, have had Bacchanalian words, had it so pleased the poet; but nevertheless, for what we have received, Lord make us thankful.

No. LXXXII.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

5th Feb. 1796.

O Robby Burns, are ye sleeping yet?
Or are ye wauking, I would wit?

The pause you have made, my dear sir, is awful! Am I never to hear from you again? I know and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late, but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs that I wish "married to immortal verse." We have several true-born Irishmen on the Scottish list; but they are now natu-

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* In the original MS. this line runs, "He up the *Gateslack* to my black cousin Bess." Mr. Thomson objected to this word, as well as to the word *Dalgarnock* in the next verse. Mr. Burns replies as follows:

"Gateslack is the name of a particular place, a kind of passage up among the Lawther hills, on the confines of this county. Dalgarnock is also the name of a romantic spot near the Nith, where are still a ruined church and a burial-ground. However, let the first line run, *He up the lang loan*, &c."

It is always a pity to throw out any thing that gives locality to our poet's verses. E.

valized, and reekoned our own good subjects. Indeed we have none better. I believe I before told you that I have been much urged by some friends to publish a collection of all our favourite airs and songs in octavo, embellished with a number of etchings by our ingenious friend Allan; what is your opinion of this?

No. LXXXIII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

February, 1796.

Many thanks, my dear sir, for your handsome, elegant present to Mrs. B——, and for my remaining vol. of P. Pindar.—Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favourite of mine. I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have already, you know, equipt three with words, and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, which I admire much.

HEY FOR A LASS WI' A TOCHER.

Tune—"*Balinamona ora.*"

Awa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms,
The slender bit beauty you grasp in your arms:
O, gie me the lass that has acres o' charms,
O, gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.

CHORUS.

Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher, then hey for a lass wi' a tocher,
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher; the nice yellow guineas for me.

Your beauty's a flower, in the morning that blows,
And withers the faster, the faster it grows;
But the rapturous charm o' the bonie green knowes,
Ilk spring they're new deckit wi' bonie white yowes.
Then hey, &c.

And e'en when this beauty your bosom has blest,
The brightest o' beauty may cloy, when possest;
But the sweet, yellow darlings wi' Geordie impprest,
The langer ye hae them—the mair they're earest.
Then hey, &c.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engagement. In my by-past songs, I dislike one thing; the name of Chloris—I meant it as the fictitious name of a certain lady; but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad.—Of this, and some things else, in my next: I have more amendments to propose.—What you once mentioned of "flaxen locks" is just: they cannot enter into an *elegant* description of beauty.—Of this also again—God bless you*!

No. LXXXIV.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

Your *Hey for a lass wi' a tocher*, is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time I have seen you debasing the god of soft desire, into an amateur of acres and guineas.—

I am happy to find you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates, and I am to have my choice of them for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humour with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In this respect, he himself says, they will far exceed the aquatinta plates he did for the Gentle Shepherd, because in the etching he sees clearly what he is doing, but not so with the aquatinta, which he could not manage to his mind.

The Dutch boors of Ostade are scarcely more characteristic and natural, than the Scottish figures in those etchings.

No. LXXXV.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

April, 1796.

Alas, my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again! "By Babel streams I have sat and wept," almost ever since I wrote you last: I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness; and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever, have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say with poor Fergusson—

"Say wherefore has an all-indulgent heaven
Light to the comfortless and wretched given?"

This will be delivered to you by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many years has been my *howff*, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I am highly delighted with Mr. Allan's etchings. *Woo'd and married and a'*, is admirable! The *grouping* is beyond all praise. The expression of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire *Turnim-spike*. What I like least is *Jenny said to Jocky*. Besides the female being in her appearance * * * * * if you take her stooping into the account she is at least two inches

* Our poet never explained what name he would have substituted for Chloris.
Note by Mr. Thomson.

taller than her lover. Poor Cleghorn! I sincerely sympathize with him! Happy I am to think that he yet has a well-grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but this is a * * * * * subject!

No. LXXXVI.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

4th May, 1796.

I need not tell you, my good sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathize in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again; and then it is to be hoped you will see the wisdom and the necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.

Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence, and returning good spirits, I remain with sincere regard yours.

P. S. Mrs. Hyslop I doubt not delivered the gold seal to you in good condition.

No. LXXXVII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

My dear sir,

I once mentioned to you an air which I have long admired. *Here's a health to them that's awa, hiney*, but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses; and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun it.

. . . . . .

CHORUS.

Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear,
Here's a health to ane I lo'e dear;
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet,
And soft as their parting tear—Jessy!

Although thou maun never be mine,
Although even hope is denied;
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy!
Here's a health, &c.

I mourn thro' the gay, gaudy day,
As, hopeless, I muse on thy charms;
But welcome the dream o' sweet slumber,
For then I am lockt in thy arms—Jessy!
Here's a health, &c.

I guess by the dear angel smile,
I guess by the love-rolling e'e;
But why urge the tender confession
'Gainst fortune's fell cruel decree—Jessy!
*Here's a health, &c.**

No. LXXXVIII.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

This will be delivered by a Mr. Lewars, a young fellow of uncommon merit. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you chuse, to write me by him; and if you have a spare half hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account. I have no copies of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the originals, or copies†. I had rather be the author of five well-written songs than of ten otherwise. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout: a sad business!

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him.

This should have been delivered to you a month ago. I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

No. LXXXIX.

Mr. BURNS to Mr. THOMSON.

Brow, on the Solway-firth, 12*th July*, 1796.

After all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel * * * * * * of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds worth of the neatest song genius you have seen. I tryed my hand on *Rothemurche* this morning. The measure is so difficult, that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me!

. . . . . .

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* In the letter to Mr. Thomson, the three first stanzas only are given, and Mr. Thomson supposed our poet had never gone farther. Among his MSS. was, however, found the fourth stanza, which completes this exquisite song, the last finished offspring of his muse. E.

† It is needless to say, that this revisal Burns did not live to perform. E.

SONG.

Tune—"*Rothemurche.*"

CHORUS.

Fairest maid on Devon banks,
Chrystal Devon, winding Devon,
Wilt thou lay that frown aside,
And smile as thou were wont to do?

Full well thou knowest I love thee dear;
Couldst thou to malice lend an ear!
O did not love exclaim, "Forbear,
Nor use a faithful lover so."
Fairest maid, &c.

Then come, thou fairest of the fair,
Those wonted smiles, O let me share;
And by thy beauteous self I swear,
No love but thine my heart shall know.
*Fairest maid, &c.**

* These verses and the letter enclosing them, are written in a character that marks the feeble state of Burns' bodily strength. Mr. Syme is of opinion that he could not have been in any danger of a jail at Dumfries, where certainly he had many firm friends, nor under any such necessity of imploring aid from Edinburgh. But, about this time, his reason began to be at times unsettled, and the horrors of a jail perpetually haunted his imagination. He died on the 21st of this month.

No. XC.

Mr. THOMSON to Mr. BURNS.

My dear sir, 14*th July*, 1796.

Ever since I received your melancholy letter by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily, therefore, for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and with great pleasure inclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were chancellor of the exchequer but for one day, for your sake!

Pray, my good sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? If too much trouble to you in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of editor. In the mean time it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour; remember Pope published the Iliad by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you, to impute any thing I say to an unworthy motive. Yours faithfully.

The verses to *Rothemurche* will answer finely. I am happy to see you can still tune your lyre.

GENERAL

CORRESPONDENCE;

INCLUDING

PIECES

OF

MISCELLANEOUS POETRY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is impossible to dismiss this volume of the correspondence of our bard, without some anxiety as to the reception it may meet with. The experiment we are making has not often been tried; perhaps on no occasion, has so large a portion of the recent and unpremeditated effusions of a man of genius been committed to the press.

Of the following letters of Burns, a considerable number were transmitted for publication, by the individuals to whom they were addressed; but very few have been printed entire. It will easily be believed, that in a series of letters, written without the least view to publication, various passages were found unfit for the press, from different considerations. It will also be readily supposed, that our poet, writing nearly at the same time, and under the same feelings, to different individuals, would sometimes fall into the same train of sentiment, and forms of expression. To avoid, therefore, the tediousness of such repetitions, it has been found necessary to mutilate many of the individual letters, and sometimes to exscind parts of great delicacy —the unbridled effusions of panegyric and regard. But though many of the letters are printed from originals, furnished by the persons to whom they were addressed, others are printed from first draughts, or sketches, found among the papers of our bard. Though, in general, no man committed his thoughts to his correspondents with less consideration or effort than Burns, yet it appears, that in some instances he was dissatisfied with his first essays, and wrote out his communications in a fairer character, or perhaps in more studied language. In the chaos of his manuscripts, some of the original sketches were found, and as these sketches, though less perfect, are fairly to be considered as the offspring of his mind, where they have seemed in themselves worthy of a place in this volume, we have not hesitated to insert them, though they may not always correspond exactly with the letters transmitted, which have been lost, or withheld.

Our author appears at one time to have formed an intention of making a collection of his letters, for the amusement of a friend. Accordingly, he copied an inconsiderable number of them into a book, which he presented to Robert Riddell, of Glenriddell, esq. Among these, was the account of his life, addressed to Dr. Moore, and printed in the beginning of this work. In copying from his imperfect sketches (it does not appear that he had the letters actually sent to his correspondents before him) he seems to have occasionally enlarged his observations, and altered his expressions. In such instances his emendations have been adopted; but, in truth, there are but five of the letters thus selected by the poet, to be found in the present volume, the rest being thought of inferior merit, or otherwise unfit for the public eye.

In printing this volume, the editor has found some corrections of grammar necessary; but these have been very few, and such as may be supposed to occur in the careless effusions, even of literary characters, who have not been in the habit of carrying their compositions to the press. These corrections have never been extended to any habitual modes of expression of the poet, even where his phraseology may seem to violate the delicacies of taste, or the idiom of our language, which he wrote, in general, with great accuracy. Some difference will indeed be found in this respect in his earlier and in his later compositions; and this volume will exhibit the progress of his style, as well as the history of his mind. In this edition, several new letters are introduced, and some, of inferior importance, are omitted.

LETTERS, &c.

No. I.

To Mr. JOHN MURDOCH,

Schoolmaster,

STAPLES INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.

Dear sir, *Lochlee*, *15th January*, 1783.

AS I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense, which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with; but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits; and in this respect, I hope, my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have been under a father, who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing, active fellow; but, to tell you the truth, sir, there is hardly any thing more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world; to see, and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be any thing original about him, which shews me human nature in a different light from any thing I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to "study men, their manners, and their ways;" and for this darling subject, I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to any thing further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched, does not much terrify me: I know that, even then, my talent for what country folks call "a sensible crack," when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then—I would learn to be happy*. However, I am under no apprehensions about that, for, though indolent, yet, so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy; and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict œconomist; not, indeed, for the sake of the money; but one of the principal parts in my composition, is a kind of pride of stomach; and I scorn to fear the face of any man living: above every thing, I abhor as hell, the idea of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, who in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears œconomy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as *Shenstone*, particularly his *Elegies*; *Thomson*; *Man of Feeling*, a book I prize next to the Bible; *Man of the World*; *Sterne*, especially his *Sentimental Journey*; *M'Pherson's Ossian*, &c. these are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct, and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race—he "who can soar above this little scene of things"—can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræfilial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves! O how the glorious triumph swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of Mankind, and "catching the manners living as they rise," whilst the men of business jostle me on every side, as an idle incumbrance in their way.—But I dare say I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs. Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere common-place story; but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare; and accept of the same for yourself, from,

Dear sir,

Yours, &c.

* The last shift alluded to here, must be the condition of an itinerant beggar. E.

The following is taken from the MS. prose presented by our bard to Mr. Riddel.

No. II.

ON rummaging over some old papers I lighted on a MS. of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out; as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas would

have been nonsense. I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope, that, some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value. It sets off thus:

Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, &c. by R. B.—a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good will, to every creature, rational and irrational. As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his *own*, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature, to see how a ploughman thinks and feels, under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however, diversified by the *modes* and *manners* of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, on all the species.

"There are numbers in the world, who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities, to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print." *Shenstone.*

"Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil or our pen designed!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind."
Ibid.

. . . . . .

April, 1783.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young inexperienced mind into; still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed on it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen, in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

. . . . . .

August.

There is certainly some connexion between love, and music, and poetry; and therefore, I have always thought a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love composition,

"As toward her cot he jogg'd along
Her name was frequent in his song."

For my own part, I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet, 'till I got once heartily in love; and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart.

. . . . . .

September.

I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher, Mr. Smith, in his excellent *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but when our own follies, or crimes, have made us miserable and wretched, to bear up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct—is a glorious effort of self-command.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
That to our folly or our guilt we owe.
In every other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say—"It was no deed of mine;"
But when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added—"Blame thy foolish self!"
Or worse far, the pangs of keen remorse;
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps where we've involved others;
The young, the innocent, who fondly loved us,
Nay more, that very love their cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments,
There's not a keener lash!
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,
Can reason down its agonizing throbs;
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
O, happy! happy! enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

. . . . . .

March, 1784.

I have often observed in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him; though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution, inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason, no man can say in what degree any other person, besides himself, can be, with strict justice, called *wicked*. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation; and what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest, how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all; I say any man who can thus think, will scan the the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.

I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind, commonly known by the ordinary phrase of *blackguards*; sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character: those who, by thoughtless prodigality, or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin. Though disgraced by follies, nay sometimes "stained with guilt, * * * * * * * *," I have yet found among them, in not a few instances,

some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty.

. . . . . .

April.

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal; I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment which are, in a manner, *peculiar* to myself; or some here and there, such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the

"Mighty tempest, and the hoary waste
Abrupt and deep, stretch'd o'er the buried earth"—

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is wrapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *him*, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, "walks on the wings of the wind." In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following.

The wintry west extends his blast, &c.
See Winter, a dirge.

. . . . . .

Shenstone finely observes, that love-verses writ without any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love-composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe to love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill, in distinguishing foppery and conceit, from real passion and nature. Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is my own; only I can say it was, at the time, genuine from the heart.

Behind yon hills, &c.
See My Nanie O.

. . . . . .

I think the whole species of young men, may be naturally enough divided into two grand classes, which I shall call the *grave* and the *merry*; though, by the bye, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. The grave I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money, and those whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The merry, are the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads, who have too much fire and spirit, to have any settled rule of action; but, without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent, in particular *he*, who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life, generally, indeed, in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him, who can sit gravely down, and make a repining comparison between his own situation, and that of others; and lastly, to grace the quorum, such are, generally, those whose heads are capable of all the towerings of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with all the delicacy of feeling.

. . . . . .

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that *being* to whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that can render life delightful; and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow creatures; that so, by forming piety and virtue into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the pious and the good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave: I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of any son of poverty and obscurity, are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of piety and virtue, than the, even lawful, bustling and straining after the world's riches and honours; and I do not see but that he may gain heaven as well (which by the bye is no mean consideration), who steals through the vale of life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way; as he who, straining straight forward, and perhaps bespattering all about him, gains some of life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see, and be seen, a little more conspicuously, than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term, the poor, indolent devil he has left behind him.

. . . . . .

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which shew them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heart-ach to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talents to native genius; yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (O how mortifying to a bard's vanity!) are now "Buried among the wreck of things which were."

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly, and describe so well; the last, the meanest of the muses' train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory. Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love: he, too, has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss

of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse: she taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy, could he have done it with your strength of imagination, and flow of verse! May the turf lie lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy the solace and rest, which this world rarely gives to the heart, tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

. . . . . .

This is all worth quoting in my MSS. and more than all.

R. B.

No. III.

To Mr. AIKEN.

(The gentleman to whom the Cotter's Saturday Night is addressed.)

Sir, *Ayrshire*, 1786.

I was with Wilson, my printer, t'other day, and settled all our by-gone matters between us. After I had paid him all demands, I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of *the first and readiest*, which he declines. By his account, the paper of a thousand copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and the printing about fifteen or sixteen: he offers to agree to this for the printing, if I will advance for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power; so farewell hopes of a second edition 'till I grow richer! an epocha, which, I think, will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.

There is scarcely any thing hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to shew my gratitude to Mr. Ballantine, by publishing my poem of *The Brigs of Ayr*. I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable, in a very long life, of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy, with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations; but, I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection; but sheerly the instinctive emotion of a heart, too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the excise. There are many things plead strongly against it; the uncertainty of getting soon into business; the consequences of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and besides I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing, that can be laid in the scale against it.

* * * * * * *

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment, which strikes home to my very soul: though sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet, I think, I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stinted bourne of our present existence; if so then, how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those, who stand to me in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? O, thou great unknown Power! thou almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me!

* * * * * * * *

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen something of the storm of mischief, thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power, in that way, to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages, is the settled tenor of my present resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail farther misery—

* * * * * * * *

To tell the truth, I have little reason for complaint; as the world, in general, has been kind to me, fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining, distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least, never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man, a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the bye, was rather more than I could well boast), still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be *done*. When all my school-fellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted, who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the *hallachores* of the human race) were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent, in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was "standing idle in the market-place," or only left the chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt fancy from whim to whim.

You see, sir, that if to *know* one's errors were a probability of *mending* them, I stand a fair chance: but, according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it*.

No. IV.

To Mrs. DUNLOP, of DUNLOP.

Madam, *Ayrshire*, 1786.

I am truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honoured with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause, as the sons of Parnassus: nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor bard dances with rapture, when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honour him with their approbation. Had you been thoroughly acquainted with me, madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly than by noticing my attempts to celebrate your illustrious ancestor, the *Saviour of his Country*.

" Great patriot hero! ill-requited chief!"

The first book I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, was *The Life of Hannibal*; the next was *The History of Sir William Wallace*: for several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious, but unfortunate stories. In those boyish days I remember in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur—

" Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat."

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen of miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and, as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymer) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him, in some measure equal to his merits.

No. V.

To Mrs. STEWART, of STAIR.

Madam, 1786.

The hurry of my preparations for going abroad, has hindered me from performing my promise so soon as I intended. I have here sent you a parcel of songs, &c. which never made their appearance, except to a friend or two at most. Perhaps some of them may be no great entertainment to you, but of that I am far from being an adequate judge. The song, to the tune of *Etrick banks*, you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much, even in manuscript. I think, myself, it has some merit; both as a tolerable description of one of nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening; and one of the finest pieces of nature's workmanship, the finest indeed we know any thing of, an amiable, beautiful, young woman*; but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which, I would not dare to spread the copy.

I am quite aware, madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure bard, when any of the great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and godlike qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. This, madam, is a task for which I am altogether unfit. Besides a certain disqualifying pride of heart, I know nothing of your connexions in life, and have no access to where your real character is to be found —the company of your compeers: and more, I am afraid that even the most refined adulation is by no means the road to your good opinion.

One feature of your character I shall ever with grateful pleasure remember; the reception I got when I had the honour of waiting on you at Stair. I am little acquainted with politeness, but I know a good deal of benevolence of temper, and goodness of heart. Surely did those in exalted stations know how happy they could make some classes of their inferiors by condescension and affability, they would never stand so high, measuring out with every look the height of their elevation, but condescend as sweetly as did Mrs. Stewart of Stair†.

No. VI.

In the name of the Nine, Amen.

We, Robert Burns, by virtue of a Warrant from *Nature*, bearing date the Twenty-fifth day of January, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine‡, *Poet-Laureat* and *Bard in Chief*, in and over the Districts and Countries of *Kyle, Cunningham*, and *Carrick* of old extent, To our trusty and well-beloved *William Chalmers* and *John M'Adam*, Students and Practitioners in the ancient and mysterious Science of *Confounding Right* and *Wrong*.

Right Trusty,

Be it known unto you, that whereas, in the course of our care and watchings over the Order and Police of all and sundry the *Manufacturers*,

* This letter was evidently written under the distress of mind occasioned by our poet's separation from Mrs. Burns. E.

* Miss A————.

† The song inclosed, is that given in the life of our poet; beginning,

'Twas e'en—the dewy fields were green, &c.

E.

‡ His birth-day.

Retainers, and *Venders* of *Poesy*; Bards, Poets, Poetasters, Rhymers, Jinglers, Songsters, Balladsingers, &c. &c. &c. &c. &c. male and female—We have discovered a certain * * *, nefarious, abominable, and wicked *Song* or *Ballad*, a copy whereof We have here inclosed; Our *Will therefore is*, that *Ye* pitch upon and appoint the most execrable individual of that most execrable Species, known by the appellation, phrase, and nickname of *The Deil's Tell Nowte** : and after having caused him to kindle a fire at the *Cross* of *Ayr*, ye shall, at noontide of the day, put into the said wretch's merciless hands the said copy of the said nefarious and wicked Song, to be consumed by fire in the presence of all Beholders, in abhorrence of, and terrorem to, all such *Compositions* and *Composers*. And this in nowise ye leave undone, but have it executed in every point as this *Our Mandate* bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when *in person We* hope to applaud your faithfulness and zeal.

Given at *Mauchline*, this twentieth day of November, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six†.

God save the Bard.

No. VII.

Dr. BLACKLOCK

To the REVEREND Mr. G. LAWRIE.

Reverend and dear sir,

I ought to have acknowledged your favour long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an opportunity of sharing one of the finest, and, perhaps, one of the most genuine entertainments, of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the poems; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of nature's force and beneficence, exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that, with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems; a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse; but whether from declining life, or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at present out of my power to accomplish that agreeable intention.

Mr. Stewart, professor of morals in this university, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers: but whether this was done or not I never could learn. I have little intercourse with Dr. Blair, but will take care to have the poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been told me by a gentleman, to whom I shewed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were therefore much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than any thing of the kind, which has been published within my memory*.

No. VIII.

From the REVEREND Mr. LAWRIE.

Dear sir, 22*d December*, 1786.

I last week received a letter from Dr. Blacklock, in which he expresses a desire of seeing you. I write this to you, that you may lose no time in waiting upon him, should you not yet have seen him.

* * * * * * *

I rejoice to hear, from all corners, of your rising fame, and I wish and expect it may tower still higher by the new publication. But, as a friend, I warn you to prepare to meet with your share of detraction and envy—a train, that always accompany great men. For your comfort I am in great hopes that the number of your friends and admirers will increase, and that you have some chance of ministerial, or even * * * * patronage. Now, my friend, such rapid success is very uncommon, and do you think yourself in no danger of suffering by applause and a full purse? Remember Solomon's advice, which he spoke from experience, "stronger is he that conquers," &c. Keep fast hold of your rural simplicity and purity, like Telemachus, by Mentor's aid in Calypso's isle, or even in that of Cyprus. I hope *you* have also Minerva with you. I need not tell you how much a modest diffidence and invincible temperance adorn the most shining talents, and elevate the mind, and exalt and refine the imagination even of a poet.

I hope you will not imagine I speak from suspicion or evil report. I assure you I speak from love and good report, and good opinion, and a strong desire to see you shine as much in the sunshine as you have done in the shade; and in the practice as you do in the theory of virtue. This is my prayer in return for your elegant composition in verse. All here join in compliments and good wishes for your further prosperity.

* Old bachelors.

† Inclosed was the ballad, probably Holy Willie's prayer.

* The reader will perceive that this is the letter which produced the determination of our bard to give up his scheme of going to the West-Indies, and to try the fate of a new edition of his poems in Edinburgh. A copy of this letter was sent by Mr. Lawrie to Mr. G. Hamilton, and by him communicated to Burns, among whose papers it was found. E.

No. IX.

To Mr. CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, 27th December, 1786.

My dear friend,

I confess I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness, ingratitude to friendship, in not writing you sooner; but of all men living, I had intended to send you an entertaining letter, and by all the plodding, stupid powers, that in nodding, conceited majesty preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily-solemn oath this!—I am, and have been, ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humour as to write a commentary on the *Revelations*.

* * * * * * * * *

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered, I inclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck. One blank in the address to Edinburgh, "Fair B——," is the heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once. There has not been any thing nearly like her, in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the great Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

I have sent you a parcel of subscription-bills, and have written to Mr. Ballantine and Mr. Aiken to call on you for some of them, if they want them. My direction is, care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge-street.

No. X.

To the EARL of EGLINTON.

My lord, *Edinburgh, January*, 1787.

As I have but slender pretensions to philosophy, I cannot rise to the exalted ideas of a citizen of the world; but have all those national prejudices, which I believe glow peculiarly strong in the breast of a Scotchman. There is scarcely any thing to which I am so feelingly alive as the honour and welfare of my country; and, as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters. Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life; but never did a heart pant more ardently, than mine, to be distinguished: though, till very lately, I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy then to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr. Wauchope called on me yesterday on the part of your lordship. Your munificence, my lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgments; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know, whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your lordship with my thanks, but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude I hope I am incapable of; and mercenary servility, I trust I shall ever have so much honest pride as to detest.

No. XI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Madam, *Edinburgh, 15th January*, 1787.

Yours of the 9th current, which I am this moment honoured with, is a deep reproach to me for ungrateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib—I wished to have written to Dr. Moore before I wrote to you; but, though every day since I received yours of Dec. 30th, the idea, the wish, to write to him has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of "the sons of little men." To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have; and to write the author of *The View of Society and Manners*, a letter of sentiment—I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write to him to-morrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on the part of lord Eglinton, with ten guineas by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to, in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is, indeed, borrowed from Thomson; but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of some of the literati here, who honour me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed any thing on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print; and the inclosed, which I will print in this edition*. You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my *Vision* long ago, I had attempted a description of Koyle; of which the additional stanzas are a part, as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the *saviour of his country*, which sooner or later I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet; alas, madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserved some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of

* Stanzas in the *Vision*, beginning "By stately tower or palace fair," and ending with the first Duan. E.

learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity, and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice, which has borne me to a height, where I am absolutely, feelingly certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede as far perhaps below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and, however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it.—But

"When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes"

you will bear me witness, that, when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood, unintoxicated with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time when the blow of calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph.

* * * * * * * * * *

Your patronizing me and interesting yourself in my fame and character as a poet, I rejoice in; it exalts me in my own idea: and whether you can or cannot aid me in my subscription is a trifle. Has a paltry subscription-bill any charms to the heart of a bard, compared with the patronage of the descendant of the immortal Wallace?

No. XII.

To Dr. MOORE.

Sir, 1787.

Mrs. Dunlop has been so kind as to send me extracts of letters she has had from you, where you do the rustic bard the honour of noticing him and his works. Those who have felt the anxieties and solicitudes of authorship can only know what pleasure it gives to be noticed in such a manner, by judges of the first character. Your criticisms, sir, I receive with reverence; only I am sorry they mostly came too late: a peccant passage or two that I would certainly have altered were gone to the press.

The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greatest part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had: and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttelton and Collins described the heart, I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame.

No. XIII.

FROM Dr. MOORE.

Sir, *Clifford-street, January* 23*d*, 1787.

I have just received your letter, by which I find I have reason to complain of my friend Mrs. Dunlop, for transmitting to you extracts from my letters to her, by much too freely and too carelessly written for your perusal. I must forgive her, however, in consideration of her good intention, as you will forgive me, I hope, for the freedom I use with certain expressions, in consideration of my admiration of the poems in general. If I may judge of the author's disposition from his works, with all the other good qualities of a poet, he has not the *irritable* temper ascribed to that race of men by one of their own number, whom you have the happiness to resemble in ease and *curious felicity* of expression. Indeed the poetical beauties, however original and brilliant, and lavishly scattered, are not all I admire in your works; the love of your native country, that feeling sensibility to all the objects of humanity, and the independent spirit which breathes through the whole, give me a most favourable impression of the poet, and have made me often regret that I did not see the poems, the certain effect of which would been my seeing the author, last summer, when I was longer in Scotland than I have been for many years.

I rejoice very sincerely at the encouragement you receive at Edinburgh and I think you peculiarly fortunate in the patronage of Dr. Blair, who, I am informed, interests himself very much for you. I beg to be remembered to him; nobody can have a warmer regard for that gentleman than I have, which, independent of the worth of his character, would be kept alive by the memory of our common friend the late Mr. George B——e.

Before I received your letter, I sent inclosed in a letter to ——— a sonnet by Miss Williams, a young poetical lady, which she wrote on reading your Mountain-daisy; perhaps it may not displease you*.

---

* The sonnet is as follows:

While soon "the garden's flaunting flowers" decay,
And scatter'd on the earth neglected lie,

I have been trying to add to the number of your subscribers, but find many of my acquaintance are already among them. I have only to add, that with every sentiment of esteem, and the most cordial good wishes,

I am, your obedient humble servant,
J. MOORE.

No. XIV.

To Dr. MOORE.

Sir, *Edinburgh, 15th February*, 1787.

Pardon my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honour you have done me, in your kind notice of me, January 23d. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast any thing higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment: but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honour Miss W. has done me, please, sir, return her in my name my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her; but the other day I got her poems, which for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the offspring of the heart, give me a great deal of pleasure. I have little pretensions to critic lore; there are I think two characteristic features in her poetry—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, *sombre* tenderness of "time-settled sorrow."

I only know what pleases me, often without being able to tell why.

The "Mountain-daisy," cherish'd by the ray
A poet drew from heaven, shall never die.
Ah, like that lonely flower the poet rose!
'Mid penury's bare soil and bitter gale;
He felt each storm that on the mountain blows,
Nor ever knew the shelter of the vale.
By genius in her native vigour nurst,
On nature with impassion'd look he gazed;
Then through the cloud of adverse fortune burst
Indignant, and in light unborrow'd blazed.
Scotia! from rude affliction shield thy bard,
His heaven-taught numbers fame herself will guard.
E.

No. XV.

From Dr. MOORE.

Dear sir, *Clifford-street, 28th February*, 1787.

Your letter of the 15th gave me a great deal of pleasure. It is not surprising that you improve in correctness and taste considering where you have been for some time past. And I dare swear there is no danger of your admitting any polish which might weaken the vigour of your native powers.

I am glad to perceive that you disdain the nauseous affectation of decrying your own merit as a poet, an affectation which is displayed with most ostentation by those who have the greatest share of self-conceit, and which only adds undeceiving falsehood to disgusting vanity. For you to deny the merit of your poems would be arraigning the fixed opinion of the public.

As the new edition of my *View of Society* is not yet ready, I have sent you the former edition, which I beg you will accept as a small mark of my esteem. It is sent by sea to the care of Mr. Creech, and along with these four volumes for yourself, I have also sent my *Medical Sketches* in one volume, for my friend Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop: this you will be so obliging as to transmit, or, if you chance to pass soon by Dunlop, to give to her.

I am happy to hear that your subscription is so ample, and shall rejoice at every piece of good fortune that befalls you. For, you are a very great favourite in my family; and this is a higher compliment than perhaps you are aware of. It includes almost all the professions, and of course is a proof that your writings are adapted to various tastes and situations. My youngest son, who is at Winchester school, writes to me, that he is translating some stanzas of your *Hallow E'en* into Latin verse, for the benefit of his comrades. This union of taste partly proceeds, no doubt, from the cement of Scottish partiality, with which they are all somewhat tinctured. Even *your translator*, who left Scotland too early in life for recollection, is not without it.

* * * * * * * * *

I remain, with great sincerity,
Your obedient servant,
J. MOORE.

No. XVI.

To the EARL of GLENCAIRN.

My lord, *Edinburgh*, 1787.

I wanted to purchase a profile of your lordship, which I was told was to be got in town; but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a "human face divine." The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your lordship, could I have been

so happy as to procure one with any thing of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, there is my noble patron. my generous benefactor. Allow me, my lord, to publish these verses. I conjure your lordship by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the powers and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition*. I owe much to your lordship; and, what has not in some other instances always been the case with me, the weight of the obligation is a pleasing load. I trust I have a heart as independent as your lordship's, than which I can say nothing more; and I would not be beholden to favours that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful attachment, where I was under the patronage of one of the much favoured sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country; allow me then, my lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic merit, to tell the world how much I have the honour to be,

Your lordship's highly indebted,
And ever grateful humble servant.

No. XVII.

To the EARL of BUCHAN.

My lord,

The honour your lordship has done me, by your notice and advice in yours of the 1st instant, I shall ever gratefully remember.

"Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast,
They best can give it who deserve it most."

Your lordship touches the darling chord of my heart, when you advise me to fire my muse at Scottish story and Scottish scenes. I wish for nothing more than to make a leisurely pilgrimage through my native country; to sit and muse on those once hard-contended fields, where Caledonia, rejoicing, saw her bloody lion borne through broken ranks to victory and fame; and, catching the inspiration, to pour the deathless names in song. But, my lord, in the midst of these enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom strides across my imagination, and pronounces these emphatic words, *I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence.*

* * * * * *

* It does not appear that the earl granted this request, nor have the verses alluded to been found among the MSS.

This, my lord, is unanswerable. I must return to my humble station, and woo my rustic muse in my wonted way at the plough-tail. Still, my lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude to that dear-loved country in which I boast my birth, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons, who have honoured me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, and at times draw forth the swelling tear.

No. XVIII.

Ext. Property in favour of Mr. Robert Burns, to erect and keep up a headstone in memory of poet Fergusson, 1787.

. . . . . .

Session-house, within the Kirk of Canongate, the twenty-second day of February, one thousand seven hundred eighty seven years.

Sederunt of the Managers of the Kirk and Kirk Yard funds of Canongate.

Which day the treasurer to the said funds produced a letter from Mr. Robert Burns, of date the sixth current, which was read and appointed to be engrossed in their sederunt book, and of which letter the tenor follows. "To the honourable baillies of Canongate, Edinburgh. Gentlemen, I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talents for ages to come will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your church-yard among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

"Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the "narrow house" of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory: a tribute I wish to have the honour of paying.

"I petition you then, gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honour to be, gentlemen, your very humble servant (*sic subscribitur*),

ROBERT BURNS."

Thereafter the said managers, in consideration of the laudable and disinterested motion of Mr. Burns, and the propriety of his request, did, and hereby do, unanimously, grant power and liberty to the said Robert Burns, to erect a headstone at the grave of the said Robert Fergusson, and to keep up and preserve the same to his memory in all time coming. Extracted forth of the records of the managers by

WILLIAM SPROTT, *Clerk.*

No. XIX.

To ———

My dear sir,

You may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper to say, thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much avenged. By the bye, there is nothing in the whole frame of man, which seems to me so unaccountable as that thing called conscience. Had the troublesome yelping cur powers sufficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use; but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervor of the rising sun: and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly, in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts conscience and harrows us with the feelings of the d*****.

I have inclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that, if they merit a place in your truly entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to. The prose extract is literally as Mr. Sprott sent it me.

The inscription on the stone is as follows:

HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSSON, POET,

Born, September 5th, 1751.—Died, 16th October, 1774.

No sculptur'd marble here, nor pompous lay,
"No storied urn nor animated bust;"
This simple stone directs pale Scotia's way
To pour her sorrows o'er her poet's dust.

On the other side of the stone is as follows:

"By special grant of the managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson."

. . . . . .

No. XX.

Extract of a Letter from ——

8th March, 1787.

I am truly happy to know you have found a friend in *********; his patronage of you does him great honour. He is truly a good man; by far the best I ever knew, or perhaps ever shall know in this world. But I must not speak all I think of him, lest I should be thought partial.

So you have obtained liberty from the magistrates to erect a stone over Fergusson's grave? I do not doubt it; such things have been, as Shakespeare says, "in the olden-time."

"The poet's fate is here in emblem shewn,
He ask'd for bread, and he received a stone."

It is I believe upon poor Butler's tomb that this is written. But how many brothers of Parnassus, as well as poor Butler and poor Fergusson, have asked for bread, and been served with the same sauce!

The magistrates *gave you liberty*, did they? Oh generous magistrates! *******, celebrated over the three kingdoms for his public spirit, gives a poor poet liberty to raise a tomb to a poor poet's memory! most generous! *******, once upon a time gave that same poet the mighty sum of eighteen pence for a copy of his works. But then it must be considered that the poet was at this time absolutely starving, and besought his aid with all the earnestness of hunger. And over and above he received a ********, worth at least one third of the value, in exchange, but which I believe the poet afterwards very ungratefully expunged.

Next week I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you in Edinburgh; and, as my stay will be for eight or ten days, I wish you or ***** would take a snug well-aired bed-room for me, where I may have the pleasure of seeing you over a morning cup of tea. But by all accounts it will be a matter of some difficulty to see you at all, unless your company is bespoke a week before hand. There is a great rumour here concerning your great intimacy with the Duchess of ——, and other ladies of distinction. I am really told that "cards to invite fly by thousands each night;" and, if you had one, I suppose there would also be "bribes to your old secretary." It seems you are resolved to make hay while the sun shines, and avoid if possible the fate of poor Fergusson, ********** *Quærenda pecunia primum est, virtus post nummos*, is a good maxim to thrive by: you seemed to despise it while in this country, but probably some philosopher in Edinburgh has taught you better sense.

Pray are you yet engraving as well as printing? —are you yet seized

"With itch of picture in the front,
With bays and wicked rhyme upon't?"

But I must give up this trifling, and attend to matters that more concern myself; so, as the Aberdeen wit says, *adieu dryly, we sal drink phan we meet**.

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* The above extract is from a letter of one of the ablest of our poet's correspondents, which contains some interesting anecdotes of Fergusson, that we should have been happy to have inserted, if they could have been authenticated. The writer is mistaken in supposing the magistrates of Edinburgh had any share in the transactions respecting the monument erected for Fergusson by our bard; this, it is evident, passed between Burns and the Kirk Session of the Canongate. Neither at Edinburgh, nor any where else, do magistrates usually trouble themselves to inquire how the house of a poor poet is furnished, or how his grave is adorned. E.

No. XXI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Madam, *Edinburgh, March 22d*, 1787.

I read your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, *I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom;* now I am distinguished, patronised, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures: his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects; there I can give you no light. It is all

> "Dark as was Chaos, ere the infant sun
> Was roll'd together, or had try'd his beams
> Athwart the gloom profound."

The appellation of a Scottish bard, is by far my highest pride; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business, for which heaven knows I am unfit enough, to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts: I have dallied long enough with life; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for; and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable; nay shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues may half sanctify a heedless character; but where God and nature have entrusted the welfare of others to his care; where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connexions will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough, and, if I meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry: being bred to labour secures me independence, and the muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only, enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country, and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honoured madam, I have given you the bard, his situation, and his views, native as they are in his own bosom.

* * * * * *

No. XXII.

TO THE SAME.

Madam, *Edinburgh, 15th April*, 1787.

There is an affectation of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Sterne may hide a selfish heart. For my part, madam, I trust I have too much pride for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this moment broken open your letter, but

> "Rude am I in speech,
> And therefore little can I grace my cause
> In speaking for myself—"

so I shall not trouble you with any fine speeches and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest, the warmest sense of your goodness.

I come abroad, in print, for certain on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to; only, by the way, I must tell you that I was paid before for Dr. Moore's and Miss W.'s copies, through the medium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place; but we can settle that when I have the honour of waiting on you.

Dr. Smith* was just gone to London, the morning before I received your letter to him.

No. XXIII.

To Dr. MOORE.

Edinburgh, 23d April, 1787.

I received the books and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs. Dunlop. I am ill skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, sir, for the honour you have done me; and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book is what I have in common with the world; but to regard these volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more supreme gratification.

I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight, and, after a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia, *Cowden Knowes, Banks of Yarrow, Tweed, &c.* I shall return to my rural shades, in all likelihood, never more to quit them. I have formed many intimacies and friendships here, but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction, to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the

* Adam Smith.

fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature.

My most respectful compliments to Miss W. If once this tangent flight of mine were over, and I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind.

No. XXIV.

Extract of a letter

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 30th April, 1787.

——Your criticisms, madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being, either in prose or verse.

I set as little by princes, lords, clergy, critics, &c. as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world, by and bye; illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, madam, that some of my own favourite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my dream, which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope in four weeks, or less, to have the honour of appearing, at Dunlop, in its defence in person.

No. XXV.

To the REVEREND Dr. HUGH BLAIR.

Lawn-market, Edinburgh, 3d May, 1787.

Reverend and much respected sir,

I leave Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship, you have shewn me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation; drawn forth from the veriest shades of life, to the glare of remark; and honoured by the notice of those illustrious names of my country, whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and mend the heart. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world, might attract notice, and honour me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those, who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man; I knew very well, that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character, when once the novelty was over: I had made up my mind, that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprize me in my quarters.

I have sent you a proof impression of Beugo's work for me, done on Indian paper, as a trifling, but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am, &c.

No. XXVI.

From Dr. BLAIR.

Argyle-square, Edinburgh, 4th May, 1787.

Dear sir,

I was favoured this forenoon with your very obliging letter, together with an impression of your portrait, for which I return you my best thanks. The success you have met with, I do not think was beyond your merits; and if I have had any small hand in contributing to it, it gives me great pleasure. I know no way in which literary persons who are advanced in years, can do more service to the world, than in forwarding the efforts of rising genius, or bringing forth unknown merit from obscurity. I was the first person who brought out to the notice of the world, the poems of Ossian; first, by the *Fragments of ancient Poetry*, which I published, and afterwards, by my setting on foot the undertaking for collecting and publishing the *Works of Ossian;* and I have always considered this as a meritorious action of my life.

Your situation, as you say, was indeed very singular; and in being brought out all at once from the shades of deepest privacy to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy that you have stood it so well; and, as far as I have known or heard, though in the midst of many temptations, without reproach to your character and behaviour.

You are now, I presume, to retire to a more private walk of life; and I trust will conduct yourself there, with industry, prudence, and honour. You have laid the foundation for just public esteem. In the midst of those employments, which your situation will render proper, you will not, I hope, neglect to promote that esteem, by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it, as may raise your character still higher. At the same time, be not in too great a haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents. For on any second production you give the world, your fate, as a poet, will very much depend. There is no doubt a gloss of novelty, which time wears off. As you very properly hint yourself, you are not to be surprized, if in your rural retreat you do not find yourself surrounded with that glare of notice and applause which here shone upon you. No man can be a good poet without being somewhat of a philosopher. He must lay his account, that any one, who exposes himself to public observation, will occasionally meet with the attacks of illiberal censure, which it is always best to overlook and despise. He will be inclined sometimes to court retreat, and to disappear from public view. He will not affect to shine always; that he may at proper seasons come forth with more advantage and energy. He will not think himself neglected if he be not always praised. I

have taken the liberty, you see, of an old man, to give advice and make reflections, which your own good sense will I dare say render unnecessary.

As you mention your being just about to leave town, you are going, I should suppose, to Dumfries-shire to look at some of Mr. Miller's farms. I heartily wish the offers to be made you there, may answer; as I am persuaded you will not easily find a more generous and better-hearted proprietor to live under, than Mr. Miller. When you return, if you come this way, I will be happy to see you, and to know concerning your future plans of life. You will find me by the 22d of this month, not in my house in Argyle-square, but at a country house at Restalrig, about a mile east from Edinburgh, near the Musselburgh road. Wishing you all success and prosperity, I am, with real regard and esteem,

Dear sir,
Yours sincerely,
HUGH BLAIR.

No. XXVII.

FROM Dr. MOORE.

Dear sir, *Clifford-street, May 23d*, 1787.

I had the pleasure of your letter by Mr. Creech, and soon after he sent me the new edition of your poems. You seem to think it incumbent on you to send to each subscriber a number of copies proportionate to his subscription money, but you may depend upon it, few subscribers expect more than one copy, whatever they subscribed; I must inform you however that I took twelve copies for those subscribers for whose money you were so accurate as to send me a receipt, and lord Eglintoun told me he had sent for six copies for himself, as he wished to give five of them as presents.

Some of the poems you have added in this last edition, are very beautiful, particularly the *Winter Night*, *the Address to Edinburgh*, *Green grow the Rashes*, and the two songs immediately following; the latter of which is exquisite. By the way, I imagine, you have a peculiar talent for such compositions, which you ought to indulge*. No kind of poetry demands more delicacy, or higher polishing. Horace is more admired on account of his *Odes* than all his other writings. But nothing now added is equal to your *Vision*, and *Cotter's Saturday Night*. In these are united fine imagery, natural and pathetic description, with sublimity of language and thought. It is evident that you already possess a great variety of expression and command of the English language, you ought therefore to deal more sparingly, for the future, in the provincial dialect—why should you, by using *that*, limit the number of your admirers to those who understand the Scottish, when you can extend it to all persons of taste, who understand the English language? In my opinion you should plan some larger work, than any you have as yet attempted. I mean, reflect upon some proper subject, and arrange the plan in your mind, without beginning to execute any part of it till you have studied most of the best English poets, and read a little more of history.—The Greek and Roman stories you can read in some abridgment, and soon become master of the most brilliant facts, which must highly delight a poetical mind. You *should* also, and very soon *may* become master of the heathen mythology, to which there are everlasting allusions in all the poets, and which in itself is charmingly fanciful. What will require to be studied with more attention, is modern history, that is, the history of France and Great Britain, from the beginning of Henry the seventh's reign. I know very well you have a mind capable of attaining knowledge by a shorter process than is commonly used, and I am certain you are capable of making a better use of it, when attained, than is generally done.

I beg you will not give yourself the trouble of writing to me when it is *inconvenient*, and make no apology when you do write, for having postponed it—be assured of this, however, that I shall always be happy to hear from you. I think my friend Mr. —— told me that you had some poems in manuscript by you, of a satirical and humorous nature (in which, by the way, I think you very strong), which your prudent friends prevailed on you to omit; particularly one called *Somebody's Confession*; if you will entrust me with a sight of any of these, I will pawn my word to give no copies, and will be obliged to you for a perusal of them.

I understand you intend to take a farm, and make the useful and respectable business of husbandry, your chief occupation: this I hope will not prevent your making occasional addresses to the nine ladies who have shewn you such favour, one of whom visited you in the *auld clay biggin*. Virgil, before you, proved to the world that there is nothing in the business of husbandry inimical to poetry; and I sincerely hope that you may afford an example of a good poet being a successful farmer. I fear it will not be in my power to visit Scotland this season; when I do, I'll endeavour to find you out, for I heartily wish to see and converse with you. If ever your occasions call you to this place, I make no doubt of your paying me a visit, and you may depend on a very cordial welcome from this family.

I am, dear sir,
Your friend and obedient servant,
J. MOORE.

* The songs interspersed in the *Correspondence with Mr. Thomson*, bear ample testimony to the accuracy of Dr. Moore's judgment. E.

No. XXVIII.

To Mr. WALKER, *Blair of Athole*.

Inverness, 5th September, 1787.

My dear sir,

I have just time to write the foregoing*, and to tell you that it was (at least most part of it) the

* *The humble petition of Bruar-water to the duke of Athole.*

effusion of a half-hour I spent at Bruar. I do not mean it was *extempore*, for I have endeavoured to brush it up as well as Mr. N——'s chat, and the jogging of the chaise, would allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhyme is the coin with which a poet pays his debts of honour or gratitude. What I owe to the noble family of Athole, of the first kind, I shall ever proudly boast; what I owe of the last, so help me God in my hour of need! I shall never forget.

The "little angel-band!" I declare I prayed for them very sincerely to-day at the fall of Fyars. I shall never forget the fine family-piece I saw at Blair: the amiable, the truly noble duchess, with her smiling little seraph in her lap, at the head of the table: the lovely "olive-plants," as the Hebrew bard finely says, round the happy mother: the beautiful Mrs. G—; the lovely, sweet Miss C. &c. I wish I had the powers of Guido to do them justice! My lord duke's kind hospitality—markedly kind indeed. Mr. G— of F—'s charms of conversation—sir W. M—'s friendship. In short, the recollection of all that polite, agreeable company, raises an honest glow in my bosom.

No. XXIX.

To Mr. GILBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh, 17th September, 1787.

My dear brother,

I arrived here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near six hundred miles, windings included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went through the heart of the Highlands by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the duke of Athole; thence cross Tay and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athole, another of the duke's seats, where I had the honour of spending nearly two days with his grace and family; thence many miles through a wild country, among cliffs grey with eternal snows and gloomy, savage glens, until I crossed Spey and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music; Badenoch, &c. until I reached Grant castle, where I spent half a day with sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country for Fort George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I saw the identical bed, in which tradition says king Duncan was murdered: lastly from Fort George to Inverness.

I returned by the coast, through Nairn, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen; thence to Stonehive, where James Burness, from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts Jean and Isabel still alive, and hale old women. John Caird, though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can: they have had several letters from his son in New-York. William Brand is likewise a stout old fellow; but further particulars I delay until I see you, which will be in two or three weeks. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing: warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his very grave, what cared I for fishing-towns or fertile carses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at Gordon castle next day with the duke, duchess, and family. I am thinking to cause my old maré to meet me, by means of John Ronald, at Glasgow; but you shall hear farther from me before I leave Edinburgh. My duty and many compliments from the north to my mother; and my brotherly compliments to the rest. I have been trying for a birth for William, but am not likely to be successful. Farewell.

No. XXX.

From Mr. R*****.

Sir, *Ochtertyre, 22d October*, 1787.

'Twas only yesterday I got colonel Edmonstoune's answer, that neither the words of *Down the burn Davie*, nor *Daintie Davie* (I forgot which you mentioned) were written by colonel G. Crawford. Next time I meet him I will inquire about his cousin's poetical talents.

Inclosed are the inscriptions you requested, and a letter to Mr. Young, whose company and musical talents will, I am persuaded, be a feast to you*.

* These incriptions, so much admired by Burns, are below.

WRITTEN IN 1768,

For the Salictum at Ochtertyre.*

Salubritatis voluptatisque causâ,
Hoc Salictum,
Paludem olim infidam,
Mihi meisque desicco et exorno.
Hic, procul negotiis strepituque,
Innocuis deliciis
Silvulas inter nascentes reptandi,
Apinmque labores suspiciendi,
Fruor.
Hic, si faxit Deus opt. max.
Prope hunc fontem pellucidum,
Cum quodam juventutis amico superstite,
Sæpe conquiescam, senex,
Contentus modicis, meoque lætus!
Sin aliter—
Ævique paululum supersit,
Vos silvulæ, et amici,
Cæteraque amoena
Valete, diuque lætamini!

ENGLISHED.

To improve both air and soil,
I drain and decorate this plantation of willows,
Which was lately an unprofitable morass.
Here, far from noise and strife,
I love to wander,

. . . . . .

* Salictum—Grove of willows, willow ground.

Nobody can give you better hints as to your present plan than he. Receive also Omeron Cameron, which seemed to make such a deep impression on your imagination, that I am not without hopes it will beget something to delight the public in due time And no doubt the circumstance of this little tale, might be varied or extended, so as to make part of a pastoral comedy. Age or wounds might have kept Omeron at home, whilst his countrymen were in the field. His station may be somewhat varied, without losing his simplicity and kindness * * * *. A group of characters male and female, connected with the plot, might be formed from his family, or some neighbouring one of rank. It is not indispensable that the guest should be a man of high station; nor is the political quarrel in which he is engaged, of much importance, unless to call forth the exercise of generosity and faithfulness grafted on patriarchal hospitality. To introduce state affairs, would raise the style above comedy, though a small spice of them would season the converse of swains. Upon this head I cannot say more than to recommend the study of the character of Eumæus in the Odyssey, which, in Mr. Pope's translation, is an exquisite and invaluable drawing from nature, that would suit some of our country elders of the present day.

There must be love in the plot, and a happy discovery; and peace and pardon may be the reward of hospitality, and honest attachment to misguided principles. When you have once thought of a plot, and brought the story into form, Dr. Blacklock or Mr. H. M'Kenzie may be useful in dividing it into acts and scenes; for in these matters one must pay some attention to certain rules of the drama. These you could afterwards fill up at your leisure; but whilst I presume to give a few well-meant hints, let me advise you to study the spirit of my name-sake's dialogue*, which is natural without being low, and, under the trammels of verse, is such as country people in these situations speak every day. You have only to bring *down* your own strain a very little. A great plan such as this, would concenter all your ideas, which facilitates the execution and makes it a part of one's pleasure. I approve of your plan of retiring from din and dissipation to a farm of very moderate size, sufficient to find exercise for mind and body, but not so great as to absorb better things. And, if some intellectual pursuit be well chosen and steadily pursued, it will be more lucrative than most farms, in this age of rapid improvement. Upon this subject, as your well-wisher and admirer, permit me to go a step further. Let those bright talents, which the Almighty has bestowed on you, be henceforth employed to the noble purpose of supporting the cause of truth and virtue. An imagination so varied and forcible as yours, may do this in many different modes; nor is it necessary to be always serious, which you have been to good purpose; good morals may be recommended in a comedy, or even in a song. Great allowances are due to the heat and inexperience of youth, and few poets can boast, like Thomson, of never having written a line, which dying they would wish to blot. In particular I wish you to keep clear of the thorny walks of satire, which makes a man a hundred enemies for one friend, and is doubly dangerous when one is supposed to extend the slips and weaknesses of individuals to their sect or party. About modes of faith, serious and excellent men have always differed, and there are certain curious questions, which may afford scope to men of metaphysical heads, but seldom mend the heart or temper. Whilst these points are beyond human ken, it is sufficient that all our sects concur in their views of morals. You will forgive me these hints.

Well! what think you of good lady Claekmannant? It is a pity she is so deaf and speaks so indistinctly. Her house is a specimen of the mansions of our gentry of the last age, when hospitality and elevation of mind were conspicuous amidst plain fare and plain furniture. I shall be glad to hear from you at times, if it were no more than to shew that you take the effusions of an obscure man like me in good part. I beg my best respects to Dr. and Mrs. Blacklock‡,

And am, sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

J. RAMSAY.

Now fondly marking the progress of my trees,
Now studying the bee, its arts and manners.
Here, if it pleases Almighty God,
May I often rest in the evening of life,
Near that transparent fountain,
With some surviving friend of my youth;
Contented with a competency,
And happy with my lot.
If vain these humble wishes,
And life draws near a close,
Ye trees and friends,
And whatever else is dear,
Farewell, and long may ye flourish!

. . . . . .

Above the door of the house, writtten in 1775.

Mihi meisque utinam contingat,
Prope Taichi marginem,
Avito in Agillo,
Bene vivere fausteque mori!

ENGLISHED.

On the banks of the Teith,
In the small but sweet inheritance
Of my fathers,
May I and mine live in peace,
And die in joyful hope!

. . . . . .

These inscriptions, and the translations, are in the hand-writing of Mr. Ramsay. E.

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* Allan Ramsay in the Gentle Shepherd. E.

† Mrs. Bruce of Clackmannan.

‡ TALE OF OMERON CAMERON.

In one of the wars betwixt the crown of Scotland and the lords of the isles, Alexander Stewart,

No. XXXI.

From Mr. J. RAMSAY,

To the REVEREND W. YOUNG,

At Erskine.

Dear sir, *Ochtertyre, 22d October*, 1787.

Allow me to introduce Mr. Burns, whose poems I dare say have given you much pleasure. Upon a personal acquaintance I doubt not you will relish the man as much as his works, in which there is a rich vein of intellectual ore. He has heard some of our Highland *luenigs* or songs played, which delighted him so much that he has made words to one or two of them, which will render these more popular. As he has thought of being in your quarter, I am persuaded you will not think it labour lost to indulge the poet of nature with a sample of those sweet artless melodies, which only want to be *married* (in Milton's phrase) to congenial words. I wish we could conjure up the ghost of Joseph M'D. to infuse into our bard a portion of his enthusiasm for those neglected airs, which do not suit the fastidious musicians of the present hour. But if it be true that Corelli (whom I looked on as the Homer of music) is out of date, it is no proof of their taste; this, however, is going out of my province. You can shew Mr. Burns the manner of singing these same *luenigs*, and if he can humour it in words, I do not despair of seeing one of them sung upon the stage, in the original style, round a napkin.

I am very sorry we are likely to meet so seldom in this neighbourhood. It is one of the greatest drawbacks that attends obscurity, that one has so few opportunities of cultivating acquaintances at a distance. I hope, however, some time or other to have the pleasure of beating up your quarters at Erskine, and of hauling you away to Paisley, &c. meanwhile I beg to be remembered to Messrs. Boog and Mylne.

If Mr. B. goes by ———, give him a billet on our friend Mr. Stuart, who I presume does not dread the frowns of his *diocesan*.

I am, dear sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

J. RAMSAY.

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earl of Mar (a distinguished character in the fifteenth century), and Donald Stewart, earl of Caithness, had the command of the royal army. They marched into Lochaber, with a view of attacking a body of M'Donalds, commanded by Donald Balloch, and posted upon an arm of the sea which intersects that country. Having timely intelligence of their approach, the insurgents got off precipitately to the opposite shore in their curraghs, or boats covered with skins. The king's troops encamped in full security, but the M'Donalds returning about midnight, surprised them, and killed the earl of Caithness, and destroyed or dispersed the whole army.

The earl of Mar escaped in the dark without any attendants, and made for the more hilly part of the country. In the course of his flight he came to the house of a poor man, whose name was Omeron Cameron. The landlord welcomed his guest with the utmost kindness; but as there was no meat in the house, he told his wife he would directly kill *maol odhar**, to feed the stranger. "Kill our only cow," said she, "our own and our little children's principal support!" More attentive however to the present call for hospitality, than to the remonstrances of his wife, or the future exigencies of his family, he killed the cow. The best and tenderest parts were immediately roasted before the fire, and plenty of *innirich*, or Highland soup, prepared to conclude their meal. The whole family and their guest ate heartily, and the evening was spent, as usual, in telling tales and singing songs beside a cheerful fire. Bed-time came; Omeron brushed the hearth, spread the cow-hide upon it, and desired the stranger to lie down. The earl wrapped his plaid about him, and slept soundly on the hide, whilst the family betook themselves to rest in a corner of the same room.

Next morning they had a plentiful breakfast, and at his departure his guest asked Cameron, if he knew whom he had entertained? "You may probably," answered he, "be one of the king's officers; but whoever you are, you came here in distress, and here it was my duty to protect you. To what my cottage afforded you was most welcome." "Your guest then," replied the other, "is the earl of Mar; and if hereafter you fall in-

. . . . . .

* Maol odhar, i. e. the brown humble cow.

to any misfortune, fail not to come to the castle of Kildrummie." "My blessing be with you, noble stranger," said Omeron; "if I am ever in distress, you shall soon me."

The royal army was soon after reassembled, and the insurgents, finding themselves unable to make head against it, dispersed. The M'Donalds however got notice that Omeron had been the earl's host, and forced him to fly the country. He came with his wife and children to the gate of Kildrummie castle, and required admittance with a confidence, which hardly corresponded with his habit and appearance. The porter told him rudely, his lordship was at dinner and must not be disturbed. He became noisy and importunate: at last his name was announced. Upon hearing that it was Omeron Cameron, the earl started from his seat, and is said to have exclaimed in a sort of poetical stanza, "I was a night in his house, and fared most plentifully, but naked of clothes was my bed. Omeran from Breugach is an excellent fellow!" He was introduced into the great hall, and received with the welcome he deserved. Upon hearing how he had been treated, the earl gave him a four merk land near the castle. And it is said, there are still in the country a number of Camerons descended of this Highland Eumæus.

No. XXXII.

From Mr. RAMSAY,

To Dr. BLACKLOCK.

Dear sir, *Ochtertyre, 27th October*, 1787.

I received yours by Mr. Burns, and give you many thanks for giving me an opportunity of conversing with a man of his calibre. He will, I doubt not, let you know what past between us on the subject of my hints, to which I have made additions in a letter I sent him t'other day to your care.

* * * * * * *

You may tell Mr. Burns when you see him, that colonel Edmonstoune told me t'other day, that his cousin colonel George Crawford was no poet, but a greater singer of songs; but that his eldest brother Robert (by a former marriage) had a great turn that way, having written the words of *the Bush aboon Traquair* and *Tweedside*. That the Mary to whom it was addressed was Mary Stewart of the Castlemilk family, afterwards wife of Mr. John Relches. The colonel never saw Robert Crawford, though he was at his burial fifty-five years ago, He was a pretty young man, and had lived long in France. Lady Ankerville is his niece, and may know more of his poetical vein. An epitaph-monger like me might moralize upon the vanity of life, and the vanity of those sweet effusions. But I have hardly room to offer my best compliments to Mrs. Blacklock, and am,

Dear doctor,

Your most obedient humble servant,

J. RAMSAY.

No. XXXIII.

From Mr. JOHN MURDOCH.

London, 28th October, 1787.

My dear sir,

As my friend, Mr. Brown, is going from this place to your neighbourhood, I embrace the opportunity of telling you that I am yet alive, tolerably well, and always in expectation of being better. By the much-valued letters before me, I see that it was my duty to have given you this intelligence about three years and nine months ago; and have nothing to allege as an excuse, but that we poor, busy, bustling bodies in London, are so much taken up with the various pursuits in which we are here engaged, that we seldom think of any person, creature, place, or thing, that is absent. But this is not altogether the case with me; for I often think of you, and *Hornie*, and *Russel*, and an *unfathomed depth*, and *lowan brunstane*, all in the same minute, although you and they are (as I suppose) at a considerable distance. I flatter myself, however, with the pleasing thought, that you and I shall meet some time or other, either in Scotland or England, If ever you come hither, you will have the satisfaction of seeing your poems relished by the Caledonians in London, full as much as they can be by those of Edinburgh. We frequently repeat some of your verses in our Caledonian society; and you may believe that I am not a little vain, that I have had some share in cultivating such a genius. I was not absolutely certain that you were the author, till a few days ago, when I made a visit to Mrs. Hill, Dr. M'Comb's eldest daughter, who lives in town, and who told me that she was informed of it by a letter from her sister in Edinburgh, with whom you had been in company when in that capital.

Pray let me know if you have any intention of visiting this huge, overgrown metropolis. It would afford matter for a large poem. Here you would have an opportunity of indulging your vein in the study of mankind, perhaps to a greater degree than in any city upon the face of the globe; for the inhabitants of London, as you know, are a collection of all nations, kindreds, and tongues, who make it, as it were, the centre of their commerce.

* * * * * * * *

Present my respectful compliments to Mrs. Burns, to my dear friend Gilbert, and all the rest of her amiable children. May the Father of the universe bless you all with those principles and dispositions, that the best of parents took such uncommon pains to instil into your minds, from your earliest infancy! May you live as he did! if you do, you can never be unhappy. I feel myself grown serious all at once, and affected in a manner I cannot describe. I shall only add, that it is one of the greatest pleasures I promise myself before I die, that of seeing the family of a man whose memory I revere more than that of any person that ever I was acquainted with.

I am, my dear friend,

Yours sincerely,

JOHN MURDOCH.

No. XXXIV.

From Mr. ———

Sir, *Gordon Castle, 31st October*, 1787.

If you were not sensible of your fault as well as of your loss, in leaving this place so suddenly, I should condemn you to starve upon *cauld kail* for *ae towmont* at least; and as for *Dick Latine** your travelling companion, without banning him *wi' a'* the curses contained in your letter (which he'll *no* value a *bawbee*), I should give him nought but *Stra'bogie castocks* to chew for *sax ouks*, or ay until he was as sensible of his error as you seem to be of yours.

* * * * * * *

Your song I shewed without producing the author; and it was judged by the duchess to be the production of Dr. Beattie. I sent a copy of it by her grace's desire to a Mrs. M'Pherson, in Ba-

* Mr. Nicol.

denoch, who sings *Morag*, and all other Gaelic songs in great perfection. I have recorded it likewise, by lady Charlotte's desire, in a book belonging to her ladyship; where it is in company with a great many other poems and verses, some of the writers of which are no less eminent for their political than for their poetical abilities. When the duchess was informed that you were the author, she wished you had written the verses in Scotch.

Any letter directed to me here will come to hand safely, and, if sent under the duke's cover, it will likewise come free; that is, as long as the duke is in this country.

I am, sir, yours sincerely.

No. XXXV.

From the REVEREND JOHN SKINNER.

Sir, *Linsheart, 14th November*, 1787.

Your kind return without date, but of post mark October 25th, came to my hand only this day, and to testify my punctuality to my poetic engagement, I sit down immediately to answer it in kind. Your acknowledgment of my poor but just encomiums on your surprising genius, and your opinion of my rhyming excursions, are both, I think, by far too high. The difference between our two tracks of education and ways of life is entirely in your favour, and gives you the preference every manner of way. I know a classical education will not create a versifying taste, but it mightily improves and assists it; and though, where both these meet, there may sometimes be ground for approbation, yet where taste appears single, as it were, and neither cramped nor supported by acquisition, I will always sustain the justice of its prior claim to applause. A small portion of taste, this way, I have had almost from childhood, especially in the old Scottish dialect; and it is as old a thing as I remember, my fondness for *Christ kirk o' the green*, which I had by heart ere I was twelve years of age, and which some years ago I attempted to turn into Latin verse. While I was young I dabbled a good deal in these things: but on getting the black gown I gave it pretty much over, 'till my daughters grew up, who, being all good singers, plagued me for words to some of their favourite tunes, and so extorted these effusions, which have made a public appearance beyond my expectations, and contrary to my intentions, at the same time that I hope there is nothing to be found in them uncharacteristic, or unbecoming the cloth, which I would always wish to see respected.

As to the assistance you propose from me in the undertaking you are engaged in*, I am sorry I cannot give it so far as I could wish, and you perhaps expect. My daughters, who were my only intelligencers, are all *foris familiate*, and the old woman their mother has lost that taste. There are two from my own pen, which I might give you if worth the while. One to the old Scotch tune of *Dunbarton's drums*.

The other perhaps you have met with, as your noble friend the duchess has, I am told, heard of it. It was squeezed out of me by a brother parson in her neighbourhood, to accommodate a new Highland reel for the marquis's birth day, to the stanza of

"Tune your fiddles, tune them sweetly, &c.

If this last answer your purpose, you may have it from a brother of mine, Mr. James Skinner, writer in Edinburgh, who I believe can give the music too.

There is another humorous thing, I have heard said to be done by the catholic priest, Geddes, and which hit my taste much.

"There was a wee wifeikie, was coming frae the fair,
Had gotten a little drapikie, which bred her meikle care;
It took upo' the wifie's heart, and she began to spew,
And co' the wee wifeikie, I wish a binna fou,
I wish, &c. &c."

I have heard of another new composition, by a young ploughman of my acquaintance, that I am vastly pleased with, to the tune of *The humours of Glen*, which I fear won't do, as the music, I am told, is of Irish original. I have mentioned these, such as they are, to shew my readiness to oblige you, and to contribute my mite, if I could, to the patriotic work you have in hand, and which I wish all success to. You have only to notify your mind, and what you want of the above shall be sent you.

Mean time, while you are thus publicly, I may say, employed, do not sheath your own proper and piercing weapon. From what I have seen of yours already, I am inclined to hope for much good. One lesson of virtue and morality delivered in your amusing stile, and from such as you, will operate more than dozens would do from such as me, who shall be told it is our employment, and be never more minded. Whereas from a pen like yours, as being one of the many, what comes will be admired. Admiration will produce regard, and regard will leave an impression, especially *when example goes along*.

Now binna saying I'm ill bred,
Else, by my troth, I'll no be glad;
For cadgers, ye have heard it said,
And sic like fry,
Maun ay be harland in their trade,
And sae maun I.

Wishing you from my poet-pen, all success, and in my other character, all happiness and heavenly direction,

I remain, with esteem,
Your sincere friend,
JOHN SKINNER.

* A plan of publishing a complete collection of Scottish songs, &c.

No. XXXVI.

From Mrs. *******.

Sir, *K———k Castle*, 30*th November*, 1787.

I hope you will do me the justice to believe, that it was no defect in gratitude for your punctual performance of your parting promise, that has made me so long in acknowledging it, but merely the difficulty I had in getting the Highland songs you wished to have, accurately noted; they are at last inclosed; but how shall I convey along with them those *graces* they acquired from the melodious voice of one the fair spirits of the hill of Kildrummie! *These* I must leave to your imagination to supply. It has powers sufficient to transport you to her side, to recall her accents, and to make them still vibrate in the ears of memory. To her I am indebted for getting the inclosed notes. They are clothed with "*thoughts* that breathe, and *words* that burn." *These*, however, being in an *unknown* tongue to you, you must again have recourse to that fertile imagination of yours to interpret them, and suppose a lover's description of the beauties of an adored mistress—why did I say unknown? The language of love is an universal one, that seems to have escaped the confusion of Babel, and to be understood by all nations.

I rejoice to find that you were pleased with so many things, persons, and places in your northern tour, because it leads me to hope you may be induced to revisit them again. That the old castle of K*******k, and its inhabitants, were amongst these, adds to my satisfaction. I am even vain enough to admit your very flattering application of the line of Addison's; at any rate allow me to believe that "friendship will maintain the ground she has occupied," in both our hearts, in spite of absence, and that when we do meet, it will be as acquaintance of a score of years standing; and on this footing consider me as interested in the future course of your fame so splendidly commenced.—Any communications of the progress of your muse will be received with great gratitude, and the fire of your genius will have power to warm, even us, frozen sisters of the north.

The friends of K*******k and K*******e unite in cordial regards to you. When you incline to figure either in your idea, suppose some of us reading your poems, and some of us singing your songs, and my little Hugh looking at your picture, and you'll seldom be wrong. We remember Mr. N. with as much good will as we can do any body, who hurried Mr. Burns from us.

Farewell, sir; I can only contribute the *widow's mite* to the esteem and admiration excited by your merits and genius, but this I give as she did, with all my heart—being sincerely yours, E. R.

No. XXXVII.

To the EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

My lord,

I know your lordship will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you, but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed my situation, my hopes and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the excise; I am told that your lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners; and your lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, emboldens me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of *home* that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters, from destruction. There, my lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude.

My brother's farm is but a wretched lease, but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it; and after the assistance which I have given and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds, and instead of seeking what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I shall lodge this sum in a banking house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or necessitous old age: * * * *

These, my lord, are my views: I have resolved from the maturest deliberation; and now I am fixed I shall leave no stone unturned to carry my resolve into execution. Your lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes; nor have I yet applied to any body else. Indeed my heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of the great who have honoured me with their countenance. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial; but to your lordship I have not only the honour, the comfort, but the pleasure of being

Your lordship's much obliged
And deeply indebted humble servant.

No. XXXVIII.

To ——— DALRYMPLE, Esq.

Of ORANGEFIELD.

Dear sir, *Edinburgh*, 1787.

I suppose the devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined by a *coup de main* to complete his purposes on you all at once, in making you a poet. I broke open the letter you sent me; hummed over the rhymes; and, as I saw they were extempore, said to myself they were very well: but when I saw at the bottom a name that I shall ever value with grateful respect, "I gapit wide but naething spak." I was nearly as much struck as the friends of Job, of affliction-bearing memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

* * * * * * * * *

I am naturally of a superstitious cast, and as soon as my wonder-scared imagination regained its

consciousness, and resumed its functions, I cast about what this mania of yours might portend. My foreboding ideas had the wide stretch of possibility; and several events, great in their magnitude, and important in their consequences, occurred to my fancy. The downfall of the conclave, or the crushing of the cork rumps; a ducal coronet to lord George G———, and the protestant interest; or St. Peter's keys to * * * * * *

You want to know how I come on. I am just in *statu quo*, or, not to insult a gentleman with my Latin, in "auld use and wont." The noble earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent being, whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul, than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die. Let the worshipful squire, H. L. or the reverend Mass J. M. go into their primitive nothing. At best they are but ill digested lumps of chaos, only one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia. But my noble patron, eternal as the heroic swell of magnanimity, and the generous throb of benevolence, shall look on with princely eye at "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

No. XXXIX.

To SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD.

Sir, *December*, 1787.

Mr. M'Kenzie, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend, has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fame as a poet. I have, sir, in one or two instances, been patronized by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by * * * * * * friends to them, and honoured acquaintances to me; but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested him for me, unsolicited and unknown. I am not master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to inquire, whether formal duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner, as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me, that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manœuvre of the needy, sharping author, fastening on those in upper life, who honour him with a little notice of him or his works. Indeed the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, as may, in some measure, palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have at times been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is, by any means, a necessary concomitant of a poetic turn, but I believe a careless, indolent inattention to œconomy, is almost inseparable from it; then there must be in the heart of every bard of Nature's making, a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, that will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune, which frequently light on hardy impudence and root-licking servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state than his, whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world, and whose character as a scholar gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

For my part, I thank heaven, my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one, who pretended in the least to the *manners of the gentleman*, should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such an one as I am, and so inhumanly cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude I thank you, sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice, and passion—but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, sir, to make you for your goodness but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest, warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happiness, and every one of that lovely flock, who stand to you in a filial relation. If ever calumny aim the poisoned shaft at *them*, may friendship be by to ward the blow!

No. XL.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Edinburgh, 21*st January*, 1788.

After six weeks confinement, I am beginning to walk across the room. They have been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spirits made me unfit to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns a commission: for I would not *take in* any poor, ignorant wretch, by *selling out*. Lately I was a sixpenny private; and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign, a starving cadet: a little more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this; for though I do want bravery for the warfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice.

As soon as I can bear the journey, which will be, I suppose, about the middle of next week, I leave Edinburgh, and soon after I shall pay my grateful duty at Dunlop-house.

No. XLI.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, 12*th February*, 1788.

Some things in your late letters hurt me: not that *you say them*, but that *you mistake me*. Religion, my honoured madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependence, but my dearest enjoyment. I have indeed been the luckless victim

of wayward follies; but, alas! I have ever been "more fool than knave." A mathematician without religion, is a probable character; an irreligious poet, is a monster.

* * * * * * * *

No. XLII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Madam, *Mossgiel, 7th March*, 1788.

The last paragraph in yours of the 30th February, affected me most, so I shall begin my answer where you ended your letter. That I am often a sinner with any little wit I have, I do confess, but I have taxed my recollection to no purpose, to find out when it was employed against you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm, a great deal worse than I do the devil; at least as Milton describes him; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honoured friend, who cannot appear in any light, but you are sure of being respectable—you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense; or, if you choose to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many and the esteem of all; but God help us who are wits or witlings by profession, if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported!

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila*. I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honour, as Dr. Beattie says to Ross, the poet, of his muse Scota, from which, by the bye, I took the idea of Coila: ('tis a poem of Beattie's in the Scottish dialect, which perhaps you have never seen.)

> "Ye shak your head, but o' my fegs,
> Ye've set auld Scota on her legs:
> Lang had she lien wi' buffe and flegs,
> Bombaz'd and dizzie,
> Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,
> Waes me, poor hizzie!"

No. XLIII.

To Mr. ROBERT CLEGHORN.

Mauchline, 31*st March*, 1788.

Yesterday, my dear sir, as I was riding through a track of melancholy, joyless muirs, between Galloway and Ayrshire; it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; and your favourite air, *captain Okean*, coming at length in my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated†.

I am tolerably pleased with these verses, but as I have only a sketch of the tune, I leave it with you to try if they suit the measure of the music.

I am so harassed with care and anxiety, about this farming project of mine, that my muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench, that ever picked cinders, or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle; perhaps with some queries respecting farming; at present, the world sits such a load on my mind, that it has effaced almost every trace of the ———— in me.

My very best compliments, and good wishes to Mrs Cleghorn.

No. XLIV.

From Mr. ROBERT CLEGHORN.

Saughton Mills, 27*th April*, 1788.

My dear brother farmer,

I was favoured with your very kind letter of the 31st ult. and consider myself greatly obliged to you, for your attention in sending me the song to my favourite air, *Captain Okean*. The words delight me much, they fit the tune to a hair. I wish you would send me a verse or two more; and if you have no objection, I would have it in the Jacobite stile. Suppose it should be sung after the fatal field of Culloden by the unfortunate Charles. Tenducci personates the lovely Mary Stewart in the song *Queen Mary's Lamentation*. Why may not I sing in the person of her great-great-great grandson*?

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* A lady (daugher of Mrs. Dunlop) was making a picture from the description of Coila in the *Vision*. E.

† Here the bard gives the first stanza of the *Chevalier's Lament*.

* Our poet took this advice. The whole of this beautiful song, as it was afterwards finished, is below.

THE CHEVALIER'S LAMENT.

The small birds rejoice in the green leaves returning,
The murmuring streamlet winds clear thro' the vale;
The hawthorn trees blow in the dews of the morning,
And wild scattered cowslips bedeck the green dale:

But what can give pleasure, or what can seem fair,
While the lingering moments are numbered by care?
No flowers gaily springing, nor birds sweetly singing,
Can sooth the sad bosom of joyless despair.

The deed that I dared could it merit their malice,
A king and a father to place on his throne?
His right are these hills, and his right are these valleys,
Where the wild beasts find shelter, but I can find none.

Any skill I have in country business you may truly command. Situation, soil, customs of countries may vary from each other, but *farmer Attention* is a good farmer in every place. I beg to hear from you soon. Mrs. Cleghorn joins me in best compliments.

I am, in the most comprehensive sense of the word, your very sincere friend,

ROBERT CLEGHORN.

No. XLV.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 28th April, 1788.

Madam,

Your powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got the offer of the excise business without solicitation; and as it costs me only six months attendance for instructions, to entitle me to a commission; which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed; I thought five and thirty pounds a year was no bad dernier resort for a poor poet, if fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

For this reason, I am at present attending these instructions, to have them completed before Whitsunday. Still, madam, I prepared with the sincerest pleasure to meet you at the Mount, and came to my brother's on Saturday night, to set out on Sunday; but for some nights preceding I had slept in an apartment, where the force of the winds and rains was only mitigated by being sifted through numberless apertures in the windows, walls, &c. In consequence I was on Sunday, Monday, and part of Tuesday unable to stir out of bed, with all the miserable effects of a violent cold.

You see, madam, the truth of the French maxim, *Le vrai n'est pas toujours le vrai-semblable;* your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I began to tremble for a correspondence, which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life.

* * * * * * * *

Your books have delighted me: *Virgil, Dryden*, and *Tasso*, were all equally strangers to me: but of this more at large in my next.

But 'tis not my sufferings thus wretched, forlorn,
My brave gallant friends, 'tis your ruin I mourn;
Your deeds proved so loyal, in hot bloody trial,
Alas! can I make you no sweeter return!

E.

No. XLVI.

From the REVEREND JOHN SKINNER.

Dear sir, *Linshart, 28th April*, 1788.

I received your last with the curious present you have favoured me with, and would have made proper acknowledgments before now, but that I have been necessarily engaged in matters of a different complexion. And now that I have got a little respite, I make use of it to thank you for this valuable instance of your good-will, and to assure you that, with the sincere heart of a true Scotsman, I highly esteem both the gift and the giver: as a small testimony of which I have herewith sent you for your amusement (and in a form which I hope you will excuse for saving postage) the two songs I wrote about to you already. *Charming Nancy* is the real production of genius in a ploughman of twenty years of age at the time of its appearing, with no more education than what he picked up at an old farmer-grandfather's fireside, though now, by the strength of natural parts, he is clerk to a thriving bleachfield in the neighbourhood. And I doubt not but you will find in it simplicity and delicacy, with some turns of humour, that will please one of your taste; at least it pleased me when I first saw it, if that can be any recommendation to it. The other is entirely descriptive of my own sentiments, and you may make use of one or both as you shall see good*.

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* CHARMING NANCY.

A song by a Buchan Ploughman.

Tune—"*Humours of Glen.*"

Some sing of sweet Mally, some sing of fair Nelly,
And some call sweet Susie the cause of their pain:
Some love to be jolly, some love melancholy,
And some love to sing of the Humours of Glen.
But my only fancy is my pretty Nancy,
In venting my passion I'll strive to be plain,
I'll ask no more treasure, I'll seek no more pleasure,
But thee, my dear Nancy, gin thou wert my ain.

Her beauty delights me, her kindness invites me,
Her pleasant behaviour is free from all stain,
Therefore, my sweet jewel, O do not prove cruel,
Consent, my dear Nancy, and come be my ain:
Her carriage is comely, her language is homely,
Her dress is quite decent when ta'en in the main;
She's blooming in feature, she's handsome in stature;
My charming, dear Nancy, O wert thou my ain.

Like Phœbus adorning the fair ruddy morning,
Her bright eyes are sparkling, her brows are serene,
Her yellow locks shining, in beauty combining,
My charming, sweet Nancy, wilt thou be my ain?

Y

You will oblige me by presenting my respects to your host, Mr. Cruikshank, who has given such high approbation to my poor *Latinity*; you may let him know, that as I have likewise been a dabbler in Latin poetry, I have two things that I would, if he desires it, submit, not to his judgment, but to his amusement; the one, a translation of *Christ's kirk o' the green*, printed at Aberdeen some years ago; the other *Batrachomyomachia Homeri latinis vestita cum additamentis*, given in lately to Chalmers, to print if he pleases. Mr. C. will know *Seria non semper delectant, non joca semper. Semper delectant seria mixta jocis.*

I have just room to repeat compliments and good wishes from,

Sir, your humble servant,
JOHN SKINNER.

The whole of her face is with maidenly graces
Array'd like the gowans, that grow in yon glen;
She's well shap'd and slender, true hearted and tender,
My charming, sweet Nancy, O wert thou my ain!

I'll seek thro' the nation for some habitation,
To shelter my jewel from cold, snow, and rain,
With songs to my deary, I'll keep her aye cheery,
My charming, sweet Nancy, gin thou wert my ain.
I'll work at my calling to furnish thy dwelling,
With ev'ry thing needful thy life to sustain;
Thou shalt not sit single, but by a clear ingle,
I'll marrow thee, Nancy, when thou art my ain.

I'll make true affection the constant direction
Of loving my Nancy while life doth remain:
Tho' youth will be wasting, true love shall be lasting,
My charming, sweet Nancy, gin thou wert my ain.
But what if my Nancy should alter her fancy,
To favour another be forward and fain?
I will not compel her, but plainly I'll tell her,
Begone, thou false Nancy, thou'se ne'er be my ain.

THE OLD MAN'S SONG.

Tune—"*Dumbarton's Drums.*"

By the REVEREND J. SKINNER.

O why should old age so much wound us? O,
There is nothing in't all to confound us, O;
For how happy now am I,
With my old wife sitting by,
And our bairns, and our oys all around us, O.

We began in the world wi' naething, O,
And we've jogg'd on, and toil'd for the ae thing, O;
We made use of what we had,
And our thankful hearts were glad,
When we got the bit meat and the claething, O.

We have liv'd all our lifetime contented, O,
Since the day we became first acquainted, O;
It's true we've been but poor,
And we are so to this hour,
Yet we never repin'd nor lamented, O.

We ne'er thought of schemes to be wealthy, O,
By ways that were cunning or stealthy, O,
But we always had the bliss,
And what further could we wiss,
To be pleas'd wi' ourselves, and be healthy, O.

What tho' we canna boast of our guineas, O
We have plenty of Jockies and Jeanies, O,
And these, I'm certain, are
More desirable by far,
Than a pock full of poor yellow sleenies, O.

We have seen many wonder and ferlie, O,
Of changes that almost are yearly, O,
Among rich folks up and down,
Both in country and in town,
Who now live but scrimply, and barely, O.

Then why should people brag of prosperity? O:
A straiten'd life we see is no rarity, O;
Indeed we've been in want,
And our living been but scant,
Yet we never were reduc'd to need charity, O.

In this house we first came together, O,
Where we've long been a father and mither, O,
And tho' not of stone and lime,
It will last us a' our time,
And, I hope, we shall never need anither, O.

And when we leave this habitation, O,
We'll depart with a good commendation, O,
We'll go hand in hand, I wiss,
To a better house than this,
To make room for the next generation, O.

Then why should old age so much wound us? O,
There is nothing in it all to confound us, O;
For how happy now am I,
With my old wife sitting by,
And our bairns and our oys all around us, O.

No. XLVII.

To Professor DUGALD STEWART.

Sir, *Mauchline, 3d May*, 1788.

I inclose you one or two more of my bagatelles. If the fervent wishes of honest gratitude have any influence with that great, unknown Being, who frames the chain of causes and events; prosperity and happiness will attend your visit to the continent, and return you safe to your native shore.

Wherever I am, allow me, sir, to claim it as my privilege, to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those, whom nature has made dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life.

No. XLVIII.

Extract of a letter

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Madam, *Mauchline, 4th May*, 1788.

Dryden's *Virgil* has delighted me. I do not know whether the critics will agree with me, but the *Georgics* are to me by far the best of Virgil. It is indeed a species of writing entirely new to me; and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation: but, alas! when I read the *Georgics*, and then survey my own powers, 'tis like the idea of a Shetland poney, drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter, to start for the plate. I own I am disappointed in the *Æneid*. Faultless correctness may please, and does highly please the lettered critic: but to that awful character I have not the most distant pretensions. I do not know whether I do not hazard my pretensions to be a critic of any kind, when I say that I think Virgil, in many instances, a *servile* copier of Homer. If I had the *Odyssey* by me, I could parallel many passages where Virgil has evidently copied, but by no means improved, Homer. Nor can I think there is any thing of this owing to the translators; for, from every thing I have seen of Dryden, I think him, in genius and fluency of language, Pope's master. I have not perused Tasso enough to form an opinion: in some future letter, you shall have my ideas of him; though I am conscious my criticisms must be very inaccurate, and imperfect, as there I have ever felt and lamented my want of learning most.

No. XLIX.

To THE SAME.

Madam, *27th May*, 1788.

I have been torturing my philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind partiality of yours, which unlike * * * * * * * * * * * * has followed me in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret in the fleeting hours of my late will-o-wisp appearance, that "here I had no continuing city;" and, but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time, that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendor put me so much out of the conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life, insignificance and poverty.

* * * * * * *

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life, that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the importance the opulent bestow on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon I had the honour to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fire-side, where the planks, that composed the floor, were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term-day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures, who, though, in appearance, partakers, and equally noble partakers of the same nature with madame, are from time to time, their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good part of their very thoughts, sold for months and years, * * * * * * * * * * not only to the necessities, the conveniencies, but the caprices of the important few*. We talked of the insignificant creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupidity and rascality, did some of the poor devils the honour to commend them. But light be the turf upon his breast, who taught, "Reverence thyself." We looked down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in air in the wantonness of his pride.

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No. L.

To THE SAME,

AT Mr. DUNLOP'S, HADDINGTON.

Ellisland, 13th June, 1788.

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a lengthen'd chain."
Goldsmith.

This is the second day, my honoured friend, that I have been on my farm: a solitary inmate of an old, smoky *spence;* far from every object I love, or by whom I am beloved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except *Jenny Geddes*, the old mare I ride on; while uncouth cares, and novel plans, hourly insult my awkward ignorance, and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul, in the hour of care, consequently the dreary objects seem larger than the life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence, when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind.

"The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his *single* woes?" &c.

Your surmise, madam, is just; I am indeed a husband.

* * * * * * * * *

* Servants, in Scotland, are hired from term to term, *i. e.* from Whitsunday to Martinmas, &c.

F.

I found a once much-loved, and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements, but as I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter; and there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery.

The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage, by a more than commonly handsome figure; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page, but *the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding.

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No. LI.

To Mr. P. HILL.

My dear Hill,

I shall say nothing at all to your mad present—you have so long and often been of important service to me, and I suppose you mean to go on conferring obligations until I shall not be able to lift up my face before you. In the mean time, as sir Roger de Coverley, because it happened to be a cold day in which he made his will, ordered his servants great coats for mourning, so, because I have been this week plagued with an indigestion, I have sent you, by the carrier, a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

Indigestion is the devil: nay, 'tis the devil and all. It besets a man in every one of his senses. I lose my appetite at the sight of successful knavery, and sicken, to loathing, at the noise and nonsense of self-important folly. When the hollow-hearted wretch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my dinner; the proud man's wine so offends my palate, that it choaks me in the gullet: and the *pulvilis'd*, feathered, pert coxcomb, is so disgustful in my nostril, that my stomach turns.

If ever you have any of these disagreeable sensations let me prescribe for you patience, and a bit of my cheese. I know that you are no niggard of your good things among your friends, and some of them are in much need of a slice. There in my eye is our friend Smellie; a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits, that I have ever met with; when you see him, as, alas! he too is smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstances, aggravated by the sneer of contumelious greatness—a bit of my cheese alone will not cure him, but if you add a tankard of brown stout, and superadd a magnum of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the summer sun.

C——h, the earliest friend, except my only brother, that I have on earth, and one of the worthiest fellows that ever any man called by the name of friend, if a luncheon of my cheese would help to rid him of some of his superabundant modesty, you would do well to give it him.

David* with his *Courant* comes, too, across my recollection, and I beg you will help him largely from the said ewe-milk cheese, to enable him to digest those——bedaubing paragraphs with which he is eternally larding the lean characters of certain great men in a certain great town. I grant you the periods are very well turned; so, a fresh egg is very good thing, but when thrown at a man in a pillory, it does not at all improve his figure, not to mention the irreparable loss of the egg.

My facetious friend, D——r, I would wish also to be a partaker; not to digest his spleen, for that he laughs off, but to digest his last night's wine at the last field-day of the Crochallan corps†.

Among our common friends, I must not forget one of the dearest of them, Cunningham. The brutality, insolence, and selfishness of a world, unworthy of having such a fellow as he is, in it, I know sticks in his stomach, and if you can help him to any thing that will make him a little easier on that score, it will be very obliging.

As to honest J—— S———e, he is such a contented, happy man, that I know not what can annoy him, except perhaps he may not have got the better of a parcel of modest anecdotes which a certain poet gave him, one night at supper, the last time the said poet was in town.

Though I have mentioned so many men of law, I shall have nothing to do with them professedly—the faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their *clients*, that is another thing; God knows they have much to digest!

The clergy, I pass by; their profundity of erudition, and their liberality of sentiment; their total want of pride, and their detestation of hypocrisy, are so proverbially notorious, as to place them far, far above either my praise or censure.

I was going to mention a man of worth, whom I have the honour to call friend, the laird of Craigdarroch; but I have spoken to the landlord of the king's-arms inn here, to have, at the next county meeting, a large ewe-milk cheese on the table, for the benefit of the Dumfries-shire whigs, to enable them to digest the duke of Queensbury's late political conduct.

I have just this moment an opportunity of a private hand to Edinburgh, as perhaps you would not digest double postage.

No. LII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 2*d August*, 1788.

Honoured madam,

Your kind letter welcomed me, yesternight, to Ayrshire. I am indeed seriously angry with you at the *quantum* of your *luckpenny*; but, vexed and hurt as I was, I could not help laughing very heartily at the noble lord's apology for the missed napkin.

I would write you from Nithsdale, and give you my direction there, but I have scarce an opportu-

* Printer of the Edinburgh Evening Courant.

† A club of choice spirits.

nity of calling at a post-office once in a fortnight. I am six miles from Dumfries, am scarcely ever in it myself, and, as yet, have little acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Besides, I am now very busy on my farm, building a dwelling-house; as at present I am almost an evangelical man in Nithsdale, for I have scarce "where to lay my head."

There are some passages in your last, that brought tears in my eyes. "The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith." The repository of these "sorrows of the heart," is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum:* and 'tis only a chosen friend, and that too at particular, sacred times, who dares enter into them.

> "Heaven oft tears the bosom-chords
> That nature finest strung."

You will excuse this quotation for the sake of the author. Instead of entering on this subject farther, I shall transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a hermitage, belonging to a gentleman in my Nithsdale neighbourhood. They are almost the only favours the muses have conferred on me in that country.

> Thou whom chance may hither lead,
> Be thou clad in russet weed,
> Be thou deckt in silken stole,
> 'Grave these maxims on thy soul.
>
> Life is but a day at most,
> Sprung from night, in darkness lost:
> Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour;
> Fear not clouds will ever lour.
> Happiness is but a name,
> Make content and ease thy aim.
> Ambition is a meteor-gleam;
> Fame, an idle restless dream;
> Peace, the tend'rest flow'r of spring;
> Pleasures, insects on the wing.
> Those that sip the dew alone,
> Make the butterflies thy own;
> Those that would the bloom devour,
> Crush the locusts, save the flower.
> For the future be prepar'd,
> Guard wherever thou canst guard;
> But, thy utmost duly done,
> Welcome what thou canst not shun.
> Follies past, give thou to air,
> Make their *consequence* thy care:
> Keep the name of man in mind,
> And dishonour not thy kind.
> Reverence with lowly heart
> Him whose wondrous work thou art;
> Keep his goodness still in view,
> Thy trust and thy example too.
> Stranger, go! heaven be thy guide!
> *Quod* the Beadesman of Nith-side.

Since I am in the way of transcribing, the following were the production of yesterday as I jogged through the wild hills of New Cummock. I intend inserting them, or something like them, in an epistle I am going to write to the gentleman on whose friendship my excise hopes depend, Mr. Graham of Fintry; one of the worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen, not only of this country, but, I will dare to say it, of this age. The following are just the first crude thoughts, "unhousel'd, unanointed, unanneal'd."

* * * * * * *

> Pity the tuneful muses' helpless train;
> Weak, timid landsmen on life's stormy main:
> The world were blest, did bliss on them depend;
> Ah, that "the friendly e'er should want a friend!"
> The little fate bestows they share as soon;
> Unlike sage, proverb'd, wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
> Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son
> Who life and wisdom at one race begun;
> Who feel by reason and who give by rule;
> Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool!
> Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should;*
> We own they're prudent, but who owns they're good?
>
> Ye wise ones, hence! ye hurt the social eye;
> God's image rudely etch'd on base alloy!
> But come * * * * * * * * * * * *

Here the muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony's writing me. I never received it. Poor fellow! you vex me much by telling me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell!

No. LIII.

To THE SAME.

Mauchline, 10th August, 1788.

My much honoured friend,

Yours of the 24th June is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife, waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire: I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings! I express myself in the fulness of my heart, and may perhaps be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not from your very odd reason that I do not read your letters. All your epistles for several months have cost me nothing, except a swelling throb of gratitude, or a deep-felt sentiment of veneration.

Mrs. Burns, madam, is the identical woman

* * * * * * * *

When she first found herself "as women wish to be who love their lords;" as I loved her nearly to distraction, we took steps for a private marriage. Her parents got the hint; and not only forbade me her company and their house, but, on my rumoured West Indian voyage, got a warrant to put me in jail, until I should find security in my about-to-be paternal relation. You know my lucky

reverse of fortune. On my eclatant return to Mauchline, I was made very welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray her; and as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her, until my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery were in my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

* * * * * * * * *

I can easily *fancy* a more agreeable companion for my journey of life, but, upon my honour, I have never *seen* the individual instance.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female partner, for life, who could have entered into my favourite studies, relished my favourite authors, &c. without probably entailing on me, at the same time, expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the other blessed, boarding-school acquirements, which (*pardonnez-moi, madame*) are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be-gentry,

* * * * * * * * * * *

I like your way in your church-yard lucubrations. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength, and always an originality, that would in vain be looked for in fancied circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter, *in progression*, by me, to send you when the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you, my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind, is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dis-social, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence.

No. LIV.

To THE SAME.

Ellisland, 16th August, 1788.

I am in a fine disposition, my honoured friend, to send you an elegiac epistle; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian.

"Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn?
Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky?"

* * * * * * * * * *

My increasing cares in this, as yet, strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children;—I could indulge these reflections, till my humour should ferment into the most acid chagrin, that would corrode the very thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat down to write to you; as I declare upon my soul I always find *that* the most sovereign balm for my wounded spirit.

I was yesterday at Mr. ——'s to dinner, for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind: from the lady of the house quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu*. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage, as a professional man, was expected: I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, independence of spirit, and integrity of soul! In the course of conversation, *Johnson's Musical Museum*, a collection of Scottish songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord beginning,

"Raving winds around her blowing*."

The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words. "Mine, madam—they are indeed my very best verses;" she took not the smallest notice of them! The old Scottish proverb says well, "king's caff is better than ither folks' corn." I was going to make a New Testament quotation about "casting pearls," but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste.

* * * * * * * * * * *

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favoured by partial heaven; whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honours and prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days, are sold to the minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe for you a stanza of an old Scottish ballad, called, *The life and age of man;* beginning thus,

"'Twas in the sixteenth hunder year
Of God and fifty three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie."

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died, during which time, his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of *The life and age of man*.

It is this way of thinking, it is these melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor, miserable children of men.—If it is a mere phantom, existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm,

* See the songs that have appeared in the *Musical Museum*.

"What truth on earth so precious as the lie!"

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophisings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth; the soul affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn; who thinks to meet with these in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life? No: to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear madam, you are now *more* than pleased with the *length* of my letters. I return to Ayrshire, middle of next week: and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest.

No. LV.

To R. GRAHAM, of FINTRY, Esq.

Sir,

When I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athole-house, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakespeare, asks old Kent why he wished to be in his service, he answers, "Because you have that in your face which I could like to call master." For some such reason, sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your board to be admitted an officer of excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I gave in his certificate, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronizing friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with any thing like business, except manual labour, I am totally unacquainted.

* * * * * * * * * * *

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life, in the character of a country farmer; but after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner, which I have lived to see throw a venerable parent into the jaws of a jail; whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

I know, sir, that to need your goodness is to have a claim on it; may I therefore beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division, where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation.

. . . . . .

When nature her great masterpiece design'd,
And fram'd her last, best work, the human mind,
Her eye intent on all the mazy plan,
She form'd of various parts the various man.
Then first she calls the useful many forth;
Plain plodding industry, and sober worth:
Thence peasants, farmers, native sons of earth,
And merchandise' whole genus take their birth:
Each prudent cit a warm existence finds,
And all mechanics' many-apron'd kinds.
Some other rarer sorts are wanted yet,
The lead and buoy are needful to the net:
The *caput mortuum* of gross desires
Makes a material for mere knights and squires;
The martial phosphorus is taught to flow,
She kneads the lumpish philosophic dough,
Then marks th' unyielding mass with grave designs,
Law, physic, politics, and deep divines:
Last, she sublimes th' Aurora of the poles,
The flashing elements of female souls.
The order'd system fair before her stood,
Nature well pleas'd pronounc'd it very good;
But ere she gave creating labour o'er,
Half-jest, she tried one curious labour more.
Some spumy, fiery, *ignis fatuus* matter;
Such as the slightest breath of air might scatter;
With arch-alacrity and conscious glee
(Nature may have her whim as well as we,
Her Hogarth-art perhaps she meant to show it)
She forms the thing, and christens it—a poet:
Creature, tho' oft the prey of care and sorrow,
When blest to-day unmindful of to-morrow;
A being form'd t'amuse his graver friends,
Admir'd and prais'd—and there the homage ends:
A mortal quite unfit for fortune's strife,
Yet oft the sport of all the ills of life;
Prone to enjoy each pleasure riches give,
Yet haply wanting wherewithal to live;
Longing to wipe each tear, to heal each groan,
Yet frequent all unheeded in his own.
But honest Nature is not quite a Turk;
She laugh'd at first, then felt for her poor work.
Pitying the propless climber of mankind,
She cast about a *standard tree* to find;
And, to support his helpless woodbine state,
Attach'd him to the *generous truly great*,
A title, and the only one I claim,
To lay strong hold for help on bounteous Graham.
Pity the tuneful muses' hapless train,
Weak, timid landmen on life's stormy main!
Their hearts no selfish stern absorbent stuff,
That never gives—tho' humbly takes enough;
The little fate allows, they share as soon,
Unlike sage proverb'd wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
The world were blest did bliss on them depend,
Ah, that "the friendly e'er should want a friend!"
Let prudence number o'er each sturdy son,
Who life and wisdom at one race begun,
Who feel by reason, and who give by rule,
(Instinct's a brute, and sentiment a fool!)
Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should*—
We own they're prudent, but who feels they're good?
Ye wise ones, hence! ye hurt the social eye!
God's image rudely etch'd on base alloy!
But come ye, who the godlike pleasure know,
Heaven's attribute distinguish'd to bestow!
Whose arms of love would grasp the human race;
Come *thou* who giv'st with all a courtier's grace;

Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes!
Prop of my dearest hopes for future times.
Why shrinks my soul, half blushing, half afraid,
Backward, abash'd to ask thy friendly aid?
I know my need, I know thy giving hand,
I crave thy friendship at thy kind command;
But there are such who court the tuneful nine—
Heavens, should the branded character be mine!
Whose verse in manhood's pride sublimely flows,
Yet vilest reptiles in their begging prose.
Mark, how their lofty independent spirit
Soars on the spurning wing of injur'd merit!
Seek not the proofs in private life to find;
Pity the best of words should be but wind!
So, to heaven's gates the lark's shrill song ascends,
But groveling on the earth the carol ends.
In all the clam'rous cry of starving want,
They dun benevolence with shameless front;
Oblige them, patronize their tinsel lays,
They persecute you all your future days!
Ere my poor soul such deep damnation stain,
My horny fist assume the plough again;
The pie-ball'd jacket let me patch once more;
On eighteen pence a week I've liv'd before.
Though, thanks to heaven, I dare even that last shift,
I trust meantime my boon is in thy gift:
That, plac'd by thee upon the wish'd-for height,
Where man and nature fairer in her sight,
My muse may imp her wing for some sublimer flight*.

No. LVI.

To Mr. PETER HILL.

Mauchline, 1*st October*, 1788.

I have been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the "Address to Lochlomond," you were so obliging as to send to me. Were I impannelled one of the author's jury, to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my verdict should be "guilty! A poet of nature's making!" It is an excellent method for improvement, and what I believe every poet does, to place some favourite classic author in his own walks of study and composition, before him, as a model. Though your author had not mentioned the name, I could have, at half a glance, guessed his model to be Thomson. Will my brother-poet forgive me, if I venture to hint, that his imitation of that immortal bard is, in two or three places, rather more servile than such a genius as his required?—e. g.

To sooth the madding passions all to peace.
Address.

To sooth the throbbing passions into peace.
Thomson.

I think the *Address* is, in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the *Seasons*. Like Thomson too he has looked into nature for himself: you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first reading; in no one instance has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but, like a true poet of nature's making, kindles in his course. His beginning is simple, and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only, I do not altogether like

"Truth,
The soul of every song that's nobly great."

Fiction is the soul of many a song that is nobly great. Perhaps I am wrong: this may be but a prose-criticism. Is not the phrase, in *line* 7, page 6, "Great lake," too much vulgarized by every-day language, for so sublime a poem?

"Great mass of waters, theme for nobler song,"

is perhaps no emendation. His enumeration of a comparison with other lakes, is at once harmonious and poetic. Every reader's ideas must sweep the

"Winding margin of a hundred miles."

The perspective that follows mountains blue—the imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digression on the yew-tree—"Ben-lomond's lofty cloud-envelop'd head," &c. are beautiful. A thunder-storm is a subject, which has been often tried, yet our poet in his grand picture has interjected a circumstance, so far as I know, entirely original.

"the gloom
Deep seam'd with frequent streaks of moving fire."

In his preface to the storm, "the glens how dark between," is noble highland landscape! The "rain ploughing the red mould," too, is beautifully fancied. Ben-lomond's "lofty, pathless top," is a good expression; and the surrounding view from it, is truly great: the

"Silver mist,
Beneath the beaming sun,"

is well described; and here he has contrived to enliven his poem with a little of that passion which bids fair, I think, to usurp the modern muses altogether. I know not how far this episode is a beauty upon the whole, but the swain's wish to carry "some faint idea of the vision bright," to entertain her "partial listening ear," is a pretty thought. But in my opinion the most beautiful passages in the whole poem, are the fowls crowding, in wintry frosts, to Loch-lomond's "hospitable flood;" their wheeling round, their lighting, mixing, diving, &c.; and the glorious description of the sportsman. This last is equal to any thing in

* This is our poet's first epistle to Graham of Fintry. It is not equal to the second, but it contains too much of the characteristic vigour of its author to be suppressed. A little more knowledge of natural history, or of chemistry, was wanted, to enable him to execute the original conception correctly. E.

the *Seasons*. The idea of "the floating tribes distant seen, far glistering to the moon," provoking his eye as he is obliged to leave them, is a noble ray of poetic genius. "The howling winds," the "hideous roar" of "the white cascades," are all in the same style.

I forget that while I am thus holding forth with the heedless warmth of an enthusiast, I am perhaps tiring you with nonsense. I must however mention, that the last verse of the sixteenth page is one of the most elegant compliments I have ever seen. I must likewise notice that beautiful paragraph, beginning, "The gleaming lake;" &c. I dare not go into the particular beauties of the two last paragraphs, but they are admirably fine, and truly Ossianic.

I must beg your pardon for this lengthened scrawl. I had no idea of it when I began.—I should like to know who the author is; but, whoever he be, please present him with my grateful thanks for the entertainment he has afforded me*.

A friend of mine desired me to commission for him, two books, *Letters on the Religion essential to man*, a book you sent me before; and, *The World unmasked, or the Philosopher the greatest cheat*. Send me them by the first opportunity. The *Bible* you sent me is truly elegant; I only wish it had been in two volumes.

No. LVII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP,

AT MOREHAM MAINS.

Madam, *Mauchline, 13th November*, 1788.

I had the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak; if it is so, poets must be weaker still; for Misses R. and K. and Miss G. M'K. with their flattering attentions, and artful compliments, absolutely turned my head. I own they did not lard me over as many a poet does his patron * * * * * * * * * * but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate inuendos of compliment, that if it had not been for a lucky recollection, how much additional weight and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked upon myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the major's friendly welcome, elegant manner, and acute remark, lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over against the finest quey† in Ayrshire, which he made me a present of to help and adorn my farm-stock. As it was on hallow-day, I am determined annually, as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

* * * * * * * *

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I will take the first convenience to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and friendship, under the guarantee of the major's hospitality. There will soon be three score and ten miles of permanent distance between us; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life, I must indulge myself in a happy day of "The feast of reason and the flow of soul."

No. LVIII.

To *****.

Sir, *Nov.* 8, 1788.

Notwithstanding the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy sectaries have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to all evil, they have given us; still, the detestation in which inhumanity to the distressed, or insolence to the fallen, are held by all mankind, shews that they are not natives of the human heart. Even the unhappy partner of our kind, who is undone, the bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes, who but sympathizes with the miseries of this ruined profligate brother? we forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went, last Wednesday, to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgments to the *Author of all Good*, for the consequent blessings of the glorious revolution. To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties civil and religious; to it we are likewise indebted for the present royal family, the ruling features of whose administration have ever been, mildness to the subject, and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh, abusive manner, in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the house of Stewart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those, whose misfortune it was, perhaps, as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils; and we may bless *God* for all his goodness to us as a nation, without, at the same time, cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas, and made attempts, that most of us would have done, had we been in their situation.

"The bloody and tyrannical house of Stewart" may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present royal family, and the sentiments of our days; but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were the royal contemporaries of the Stewarts more attentive to their subjects' rights? Might not the epi-

* The poem, entitled *An address to Loch-lomond*, is said to be written by a gentleman, now one of the masters of the High-school at Edinburgh, and the same who translated the beautiful story of the *Paria*, as published in the *Bee* of Dr. Anderson.

† Heifer.

thets of "bloody and tyrannical" be, with at least equal justice, applied to the house of Tudor, of York, or any other of their predecessors?

The simple state of the case, sir, seems to be this—At that period, the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was, like other sciences and other knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stewarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation, and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science, which had lately dawned over Europe, the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling liberties of his people: with us, luckily the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but likewise happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stewarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless *God;* but cannot join in the ridicule against them. Who does not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden until put to the touchstone of exigency; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjunctures of circumstances, which exalt us as heroes, or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr. Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being: who would believe, sir, that, in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement, while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people, under our national protection, should complain, not against our monarch and a few favourite advisers, but against our *whole legislative body*, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms, as our forefathers did of the house of Stewart! I will not, I cannot enter into the merits of the cause, but I dare say the American congress, in 1776, will be allowed to be as able and as enlightened as the English convention was in 1688; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed house of Stewart.

To conclude, sir; let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton (and particularly every Scotsman), who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers*.

No. LIX.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 17th December, 1788.

My dear honoured friend,

Yours, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. Almost "blind and wholly deaf," are melancholy news of human nature; but when told of a much-loved and honoured friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part, and gratitude on mine, began a tie, which has gradually and strongly entwisted itself among the dearest chords of my bosom; and I tremble at the omens of your late and present ailing habit and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely, when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns. My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But be that as it may, the heart of the man, and the fancy of the poet, are the two grand considerations for which I live: if miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods, and picking up grubs: not to mention barn-door cocks and mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time.—If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be no great pleasure to either of us; but if I hear you have got so well again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, madam, for I will make my threatenings good. I am to be at the new-year-day fair of Ayr, and by all that is sacred in the world, friend! I *will* come and see you.

* * * * * * *

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old schoolfellow and friend, was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world!—They spoil these "social offsprings of the heart." Two veterans of the "men of the world" would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the old Scotch phrase, "Auld lang syne," exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr. Ker will save you the postage†.

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* This letter was sent to the publisher of some newspaper, probably the publisher of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*. E.

† Here follows the song of *Auld lang syne*, as printed *p.* 114.

Light be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment! There is more of the fire of native genius in it, than in half a dozen of modern English Bacchanalians. Now I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas, which please me mightily.

Go fetch to me a pint o'wine,
An fill it in a silver tassie;
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonny lassie;
The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith;
Fu' loud the wind blaws frae the ferry;
The ship rides by the Berwick-law,
And I maun lea'e my bonnie Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are ranked ready;
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
The battle closes thick and bloody:
But it's not the roar o' sea or shore,
Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar,
It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary.

No. LX.

To Miss DAVIES,

(A young lady who had heard he had been making a ballad on her, inclosing that ballad.)

Madam, *December*, 1788.

I understand my very worthy neighbour, Mr. Riddel, has informed you that I have made you the subject of some verses. There is something so provoking in the idea of being the burden of a ballad, that I do not think Job or Moses, though such patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what that ballad was: so my worthy friend has done me a mischief, which I dare say he never intended; and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified, or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment, and never meant to have met your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman, who had some genius, much eccentricity, and very considerable dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental group of life into which one is thrown, wherever this gentleman met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his heart, he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely, he said, as a *nota bene* to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, is my muse to me; and the verses I do myself the honour to send you, are a *memento* exactly of the same kind that he indulged in.

It may be more owing to the fastidiousness of my caprice, than the delicacy of my taste, but I am so often tired, disgusted, and hurt with the insipidity, affectation, and pride of mankind, that when I meet with a person "after my own heart," I positively feel what an orthodox protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspiration; and I can no more desist rhyming on the impulse, than an Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air. A distich or two would be the consequence, though the object which hit my fancy were grey-bearded age; but where my theme is youth and beauty, a young lady whose personal charms, wit, and sentiment, are equally striking and unaffected, by heavens! though I had lived three score years a married man, and three score years before I was a married man, my imagination would hallow the very idea: and I am truly sorry that the inclosed stanzas have done such poor justice to such a subject.

No. LXI.

From Mr. G. BURNS.

Dear brother, *Mossgiel, 1st Jan.* 1789.

I have just finished my new-year's day breakfast in the usual form, which naturally makes me call to mind the days of former years, and the society in which we used to begin them; and when I look at our family vicissitudes, "thro' the dark postern of time long elapsed," I cannot help remarking to you, my dear brother, how good the *God* of *Seasons* is to us; and that, however some clouds may seem to lour over the portion of time before us, we have great reason to hope that all will turn out well.

Your mother and sisters, with Robert the second, join me in the compliments of the season to you and Mrs. Burns, and beg you will remember us in the same manner to William, the first time you see him.

I am, dear brother, yours,
GILBERT BURNS.

No. LXII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, new-year-day morning, 1789.

This, dear madam, is a morning of wishes, and would to God, that I came under the apostle James' description!—*the prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* In that case, madam, you should welcome in a year full of blessings: every thing that obstructs or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment, should be removed, and every pleasure that frail humanity can taste, should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian, that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion, for breaking in on that habitual routine of life and thought, which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery.

This day; the first Sunday of May; a breezy, blue-skyed noon some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of autumn; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holiday.

* * * * * * * * *

I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the Spectator, "The Vision of Mirza;" a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables: "On the 5th day of the moon, which, according to the custom of my fore-fathers, I always *keep holy*, after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer."

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the fox-glove, the wild brier-rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew, in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plovers, in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Eolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave.

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No. LXIII.

To Dr. MOORE.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 4th January, 1789.

Sir,

As often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian colossus, that my mind misgives me, and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have, at last, got some business with you, and business letters are written by the style-book. I say my business is with you, sir, for you never had any with me, except the business that benevolence has in the mansion of poverty.

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I know that a very great deal of my late eclat was owing to the singularity of my situation, and the honest prejudice of Scotsmen; but still, as I said in the preface to my first edition, I do look upon myself as having some pretensions from nature to the poetic character. I have not a doubt but the knack, the aptitude, to learn the muses' trade, is a gift bestowed by Him, "who forms the secret bias of the soul;"—but I as firmly believe, that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains. At least I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day, a day that may never arrive—but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any, of the profession, the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try (for until trial it is impossible to know) whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses, in a good measure, the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend—not only of abilities to judge, but with good-nature enough, like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than is exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I inclose you an essay of mine in a walk of poesy to me entirely new; I mean the epistle addressed to R. G. Esq. or Robert Graham, of Fintry, Esq. a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story, and to give you the one, I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of

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I believe I shall, in whole, *l.* 100 copy-right included, clear about *l.* 400, some little odds; and even part of this depends upon what the gentleman has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honour to interest yourself much in my welfare.

* * * * * * * * *

To give the rest of my story in brief, I have married "my Jean," and taken a farm: with the first step I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last, it is rather the reverse. I have a younger brother, who supports my aged mother; another still younger brother, and three sisters in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about *l.* 180, to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much—I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part: I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety, and fraternal affection, into the scale in my favour, might help to smooth matters at the *grand reckoning*. There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy: I have an excise officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr. Graham, who is one of the commissioners of excise, was, if in his power,

to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a treasury warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c.

* * * * * * * * * *

Thus, secure of a livelihood, "to thee, sweet poetry, delightful maid," I would consecrate my future days.

No. LXIV.

To PROFESSOR D. STEWART.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 20th Jan. 1789.

Sir,

The inclosed sealed packet I sent to Edinburgh, a few days after I had the happiness of meeting you in Ayrshire, but you were gone for the continent. I have now added a few more of my productions, those for which I am indebted to the Nithsdale muses. The piece inscribed to R. G. Esq. is a copy of verses I sent Mr. Graham, of Fintry, accompanying a request for his assistance in a matter, to me, of very great moment. To that gentleman I am already doubly indebted: for deeds of kindness of serious import to my dearest interests, done in a manner grateful to the delicate feelings of sensibility. This poem is a species of composition new to me, but I do not intend it shall be my last essay of the kind, as you will see by the "Poet's progress." These fragments, if my design succeed, are but a small part of the intended whole. I propose it shall be the work of my utmost exertions ripened by years; of course I do not wish it much known. The fragment beginning "A little, upright, pert, tart, &c." I have not shewn to man living, till I now send it you. It forms the postulata, the axioms, the definition of a character, which, if it appear at all, shall be placed in a variety of lights. This particular part, I send you merely as a sample of my hand at portrait sketching; but lest idle conjecture should pretend to point out the original, please let it be for your single, sole inspection.

Need I make any apology for this trouble, to a gentleman who has treated me with such marked benevolence and peculiar kindness; who has entered into my interests with so much zeal, and on whose critical decisions I can so fully depend? A poet as I am by trade, these decisions to me are of the last consequence. My late transient acquaintance among some of the mere rank and file of greatness, I resign with ease; but to the distinguished champions of genius and learning, I shall be ever ambitious of being known. The native genius and accurate discernment in Mr. Stewart's critical strictures; the justness (iron justice, for he has no bowels of compassion for a poor poetic sinner) of Dr. Gregory's remarks, and the delicacy of professor Dalziel's taste, I shall ever revere. I shall be in Edinburgh some time next month.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your highly obliged, and very humble servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

No. XLV.

TO BISHOP GEDDES.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 3d February, 1789.

Venerable father,

As I am conscious that wherever I am you do me the honour to interest yourself in my welfare, it gives me pleasure to inform you, that I am here at last, stationary in the serious business of life, and have now not only the retired leisure, but the hearty inclination, to attend to those great and important questions—what I am? where I am? and for what I am destined?

In that first concern, the conduct of the man, there was ever but one side on which I was habitually blameable, and there I have secured myself in the way pointed out by Nature and Nature's God. I was sensible that, to so helpless a creature as a poor poet, a wife and family were incumbrances, which a species of prudence would bid him shun; but when the alternative was, being at eternal warfare with myself, on account of habitual follies, to give them no worse name, which no general example, no licentious wit, no sophistical infidelity, would, to me, ever justify, I must have been a fool to have hesitated, and a madman to have made another choice.

* * * * * * * *

In the affair of a livelihood, I think myself tolerably secure: I have good hopes of my farm, but, should they fail, I have an excise commission, which, on my simple petition, will, at any time, procure me bread. There is a certain stigma affixed to the character of an excise officer, but I do not intend to borrow honour from any profession; and though the salary be comparatively small, it is great to any thing that the first twenty-five years of my life taught me to expect.

* * * * * * * *

Thus, with a rational aim and method in life, you may easily guess, my reverend and much-honoured friend, that my characteristical trade is not forgotten. I am, if possible, more than ever an enthusiast to the muses. I am determined to study man and nature, and in that view incessantly; and to try if the ripening and corrections of years can enable me to produce something worth preserving.

You will see in your book, which I beg your pardon for detaining so long, that I have been tuning my lyre on the banks of Nith. Some large poetic plans that are floating in my imagination, or partly put in execution, I shall impart to you when I have the pleasure of meeting with you; which, if you are then in Edinburgh, I shall have about the beginning of March.

That acquaintance, worthy sir, with which you were pleased to honour me, you must still allow me to challenge; for with whatever unconcern I give up my transient connexion with the merely great, I cannot lose the patronizing notice of the learned and good, without the bitterest regret.

No. LXVI.

From the REVEREND P. CARFRAE.

Sir, *2d January*, 1789.

If you have lately seen Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop, you have certainly heard of the author of the verses which accompany this letter. He was a man highly respectable for every accomplishment and virtue which adorns the character of a man or a christian. To a great degree of literature, of taste, and poetic genius, was added an invincible modesty of temper, which prevented, in a great degree, his figuring in life, and confined the perfect knowledge of his character and talents to the small circle of his chosen friends. He was untimely taken from us, a few weeks ago, by an inflammatory fever, in the prime of life—beloved by all who enjoyed his acquaintance, and lamented by all, who have any regard for virtue or genius. There is a woe pronounced in scripture against the person, whom all men speak well of; if ever that woe fell upon the head of mortal man, it fell upon him. He has left behind him a considerable number of compositions, chiefly poetical; sufficient, I imagine, to make a large octavo volume. In particular, two complete and regular tragedies, a farce of three acts, and some smaller poems on different subjects. It falls to my share, who have lived in the most intimate and uninterrupted friendship with him from my youth upwards, to transmit to you the verses he wrote on the publication of your incomparable poems. It is probable they were his last, as they were found in his scrutoire, folded up with the form of a letter addressed to you, and, I imagine, were only prevented from being sent by himself, by that melancholy dispensation, which we still bemoan. The verses themselves I will not pretend to criticise, when writing to a gentleman, whom I consider as entirely qualified to judge of their merit. They are the only verses he seems to have attempted in the Scottish style; and I hesitate not to say, in general, that they will bring no dishonour on the Scottish muse; and allow me to add, that, if it is your opinion they are not unworthy of the author, and will be no discredit to you, it is the inclination of Mr. Mylne's friends that they should be immediately published in some periodical work, to give the world a specimen of what may be expected from his performances in the poetic line, which, perhaps, will be afterwards published for the advantage of his family.

* * * * * * *

I must beg the favour of a letter from you, acknowledging the receipt of this, and to be allowed to subscribe myself, with great regard,

Sir, your most obedient servant,

P. CARFRAE.

No. LXVII.

TO Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 4th March, 1789.

Here am I, my honoured friend, returned safe from the capital. To a man, who has a home, however humble or remote—if that home is like mine, the scene of domestic comfort—the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust.

"Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you!"

When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—"What merits has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule, and the key of riches, in his puny fist, and I am kicked into the world, the sport of folly, or the victim of pride?" I have read somewhere of a monarch, (in Spain I think it was) who was so out of humour with the Ptolemean system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator's council, he could have saved him a great deal of labour and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with with humble stealth through the pomp of Princes' street, it has suggested itself to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a perspective. This trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of many of his majesty's liege subjects, in the way of tossing the head and tiptoe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage, in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow, or making way to a great man, and that too within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence, or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature itself requires; as a measuring-glance at its towering altitude, would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, madam, in your idea of poor Mylne's poem, which he has addressed to me. The piece has a good deal of merit, but it has one great fault—it is, by far, too long. Besides, my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice, under the title of Scottish poets, that the very term Scottish poetry, borders on the burlesque. When I write to Mr. Carfrae, I shall advise him rather to try one of his deceased friend's English pieces. I am prodigiously hurried with my own matters, else I would have requested a perusal of all Mylne's poetic performances; and would have offered his friends my assistance in either selecting or correcting what would be proper for the press. What it is that occupies me so much, and perhaps a little oppresses my present spirits, shall fill up a paragraph in some future letter. In the mean time allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine * * * * *

I give you them, that, as you have seen the original, you may guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them, be any real improvement.

Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,
Shrink mildly fearful even from applause,

Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,
And all you are, my charming ****, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows,
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
Your form shall be the image of your mind;
Your manners shall so true your soul express,
That all shall long to know the worth they guess;
Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,
And even sick'ning envy must approve*."

No. LXVIII.

TO THE REVEREND P. CARFRAE.

Reverend sir, 1789.

I do not recollect that I have ever felt a severer pang of shame, than on looking at the date of your obliging letter, which accompanied Mr. Mylne's poem.

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I am much to blame: the honour Mr. Mylne has done me, greatly enhanced in its value by the endearing, though melancholy circumstance, of its being the last production of his muse, deserved a better return.

I have, as you hint, thought of sending a copy of the poem to some periodical publication; but, on second thoughts, I am afraid that, in the present case, it would be an improper step. My success, perhaps as much accidental as merited, has brought an inundation of nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry. Subscription-bills for Scottish poems, have so dunned, and daily do dun the public, that the very name is in danger of contempt. For these reasons, if publishing any of Mr. M.'s poems in a magazine, &c. be at all prudent, in my opinion, it certainly should not be a Scottish poem. The profits of the labours of a man of genius, are, I hope, as honourable as any profits whatever; and Mr. Mylne's relations are most justly entitled to that honest harvest, which fate has denied himself to reap. But let the friends of Mr. Mylne's fame (among whom I crave the honour of ranking myself) always keep in eye his respectability as a man and as a poet, and take no measure that, before the world knows any thing about him, would risk his name and character being classed with the fools of the times.

I have, sir, some experience of publishing; and the way in which I would proceed with Mr. Mylne's poems, is this:—I would publish, in two or three English and Scottish public papers, any one of his English poems, which should, by private judges, be thought the most excellent, and mention it, at the same time, as one of the productions of a Lothian farmer, of respectable character, lately deceased, whose poems his friends had it in idea to publish, soon, by subscription, for the sake of his numerous family:—not in pity to that family, but in justice to what his friends think the poetic merits of the deceased; and to secure, in the most effectual manner, to those tender connexions, whose right it is, the pecuniary reward of those merits.

* These beautiful lines, we have reason to believe, are the production of the lady to whom this letter is addressed. E.

No. LXIX.

To Dr. MOORE.

Sir, *Ellisland, 23d March.* 1789.

The gentleman who will deliver you this is a Mr. Neilson, a worthy clergyman in my neighbourhood, and a very particular acquaintance of mine. As I have troubled him with this packet, I must turn him over to your goodness, to recompense him for it in a way in which he much needs your assistance, and where you can effectually serve him:—Mr. Neilson is on his way for France, to wait on his grace of Queensberry, on some little business of a good deal of importance to him, and he wishes for your instructions respecting the most eligible mode of travelling, &c. for him, when he has crossed the channel. I should not have dared to take this liberty with you, but that I am told, by those who have the honour of your personal acquaintance, that to be a poor honest Scotchman is a letter of recommendation to you, and that to have it in your power to serve such a character, gives you much pleasure.

* * * * * * * * * *

The enclosed ode is a compliment to the memory of the late Mrs. ******, of *********. You, probably, knew her personally, an honour of which I cannot boast; but I spent my early years in her neighbourhood, and among her servants and tenants. I know that she was detested with the most heartfelt cordiality. However, in the particular part of her conduct which roused my poetic wrath, she was much less blameable. In January last, on my road to Ayrshire, I had put up at bailie Whigham's, in Sanquhar, the only tolerable inn in the place. The frost was keen, and the grim evening, and howling wind, were ushering in a night of snow and drift. My horse and I were both much fatigued with the labours of the day, and just as my friend, the bailie, and I were bidding defiance to the storm, over a smoking bowl, in wheels the funeral pageantry of the late great Mrs. ******, and poor I am forced to brave all the horrors of the tempestuous night, and jade my horse, my young favourite horse, whom I had just christened Pegasus, twelve miles farther on, through the wildest moors and hills of Ayrshire, to New Cumnock, the next inn. The powers of poesy and prose sink under me, when I would describe what I felt. Suffice it to say, that when a good fire at New Cumnock had so far recovered my frozen sinews, I sat down and wrote the inclosed ode*.

I was at Edinburgh lately, and settled finally with Mr. Creech; and I must own, that, at last, he has been amicable and fair with me.

* The ode inclosed will be found among the *Poems*. E.

No. LXX.

To Mr. HILL.

Ellisland, 2d April, 1789.

I will make no excuse, my dear Bibliopolus (God forgive me for murdering language !), that I have sat down to write you on this vile paper.

* * * * * * *

It is economy, sir ; it is that cardinal virtue, prudence ; so I beg you will sit down, and either compose or borrow a panegyric. If you are going to borrow, apply to

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to compose, or rather to compound, something very clever on my remarkable frugality ; that I write to one of my most esteemed friends on this wretched paper, which was originally intended for the venal fist of some drunken exciseman, to take dirty notes in a miserable vault of an ale-cellar.

O Frugality ! thou mother of ten thousand blessings—thou cook of fat beef and dainty greens !—thou manufacturer of warm Shetland hose, and comfortable surtouts !—thou old housewife, darning thy decayed stockings with thy ancient spectacles on thy aged nose !—lead me, hand me in thy clutching palsied fist, up those heights, and through those thickets, hitherto inaccessible, and impervious to my anxious, weary feet :—not those Parnassian craggs, bleak and barren, where the hungry worshippers of fame are, breathless, clambering, hanging between heaven and hell ; but those glittering cliffs of Potosi, where the all-sufficient, all-powerful deity, Wealth, holds his immediate court of joys and pleasures ; where the sunny exposure of plenty, and the hot walls of profusion, produce those blissful fruits of luxury, exoties in this world, and natives of paradise ! Thou withered sybil, my sage conductress, usher me into the refulgent, adored presence !—The power, splendid and potent as he now is, was once the puling nursling of thy faithful care, and tender arms ! Call me thy son, thy cousin, thy kinsman, or favourite, and adjure the god, by the scenes of his infant years. no longer to repulse me as a stranger, or an alien, but to favour me with his peculiar countenance and protection ! He daily bestows his greatest kindness on the undeserving and the worthless—assure him, that I bring ample documents of meritorious demerits ! Pledge yourself for me that, for the glorious cause of Lucre, I will do any thing, be any thing—but the horse-leech of private oppression, or the vulture of public robbery !

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But to descend from heroics,

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I want a Shakspeare ; I want likewise an English dictionary—Johnson's, I suppose, is best. In these and all my prose commissions, the cheapest is always the best for me. There is a small debt of honour that I owe Mr. Robert Cleghorn, in Saughton Mills, my worthy friend, and your well-wisher. Please give him, and urge him to take it, the first time you see him, ten shillings worth of any thing you have to sell, and place it to my account.

The library scheme that I mentioned to you, is already begun, under the direction of captain Riddel. There is another in emulation of it going on at Closeburn, under the auspices of Mr. Monteith, of Closeburn, which will be on a greater scale than ours. Capt. R. gave his infant society a great many of his old books, else I had written you on that subject ; but, one of these days, I shall trouble you with a commission for " The Monkland Friendly Society"—a copy of *The Spectator*, *Mirror*, and *Lounger* ; *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, *Guthrie's Geographical Grammar*, with some religious pieces, will likely be our first order.

When I grow richer, I will write to you on gilt post, to make amends for this sheet. At present, every guinea has a five guinea errand with,

My dear sir,
Your faithful, poor, but honest friend,
R. B.

No. LXXI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 4th April, 1789.

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I no sooner hit on any poetic plan or fancy, but I wish to send it to you ; and if knowing and reading these give half the pleasure to you, that communicating them to you gives to me, I am satisfied.

* * * * * * * *

I have a poetic whim in my head, which I at present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the right honourable C. J. Fox ; but how long that fancy may hold, I cannot say. A few of the first lines I have just rough-sketched as follows :

SKETCH.

How wisdom and folly meet, mix, and unite ;
How virtue and vice blend their black and their white ;
How genius, the illustrious father of fiction,
Confounds rule and law, reconciles contradiction—
I sing : if these mortals, the critics, should bustle,
I care not, not I, let the critics go whistle.

But now for a patron, whose name and whose glory
At once may illustrate and honour my story.

Thou first of our orators, first of our wits ;
Yet whose parts and acquirements seem mere lucky hits ;

With knowledge so vast, and with judgment so strong,
No man with the half of 'em e'er went far wrong;
With passions so potent, and fancies so bright,
No man with the half of 'em e'er went quite right;
A sorry, poor misbegot son of the muses,
For using thy name offers fifty excuses.

Good L—d, what is man! for as simple he looks,
Do but try to develop his hooks and his crooks;
With his depths and his shallows, his good and his evil,
All in all he's a problem must puzzle the devil.

On his one ruling passion, sir Pope hugely labours,
That, like th' old Hebrew-walking switch, eats up its neighbours:
Mankind are his show-box—a friend, would you know him?
Pull the string, ruling passion the picture will shew him.
What pity, in rearing so beauteous a system,
One trifling particular, truth, should have miss'd him;
For, spite of his fine theoretic positions,
Mankind is a science defies definitions.

Some sort all our qualities each to its tribe,
And think human nature they truly describe;
Have you found this, or t'other? there's more in the wind,
As by one drunken fellow his comrades you'll find.
But such is the flaw, or the depth of the plan,
In the make of that wonderful creature, call'd Man,
No two virtues, whatever relation they claim,
Nor even two different shades of the same,
Though like as was ever twin brother to brother,
Possessing the one shall imply you've the other.

* * * * * * * *

On the 20th current I hope to have the honour of assuring you, in person, how sincerely I am.

* * * * * * * * *

No. LXXII.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 4th May, 1789.

My dear sir,

Your *duty free* favour, of the 26th April, I received two days ago. I will not say I perused it with pleasure; that is the cold compliment of ceremony; I perused it, sir, with delicious satisfaction—in short, it is such a letter, that not you, nor your friend, but the legislature by express proviso in their postage laws should frank. A letter informed with the soul of friendship is such an honour to human nature, that they should order it free ingress and egress to and from their bags and mails, as an encouragement and mark of distinction to super-eminent virtue.

I have just put the last hand to a little poem which I think will be something to your taste. One morning, lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields sowing some grass seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow, who could shoot a hare at this season, when they all of them have young ones. Indeed there is something in that business of destroying for our sport individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, which I could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue.

* * * * * * * * *

On seeing a fellow wound a hare with a shot, April, 1789.

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!
May never pity sooth thee with a sigh,
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains;
No more the thickening brakes or verdant plains,
To thee a home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled innocent, some wonted form;
That wonted form, alas! thy dying bed,
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy blood stained bosom warm.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe;
The playful pair crowd fondly by thy side;
Ah! helpless nurslings, who will now provide
That life a mother only can bestow?

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruthless wretch, and mourn thy hapless fate.

* * * * * * * * *

Let me know how you like my poem. I am doubtful whether it would not be an improvement to keep out the last stanza but one altogether.

C—— is a glorious production of the author of man. You, he, and the noble colonel of the C—— F—— are to me

"Dear as the ruddy drops which warm my breast."

I have a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of "*three gude fellows ayont the glen*."

No. LXXIII.

The poem in the preceding letter, had also been sent by our bard to Dr. Gregory, for his criticism. The following is that gentleman's reply.

From Dr. GREGORY.

Dear sir, *Edinburgh, 2d June*, 1789.

I take the first leisure hour I could command, to thank you for your letter, and the copy of verses enclosed in it. As there is real poetic merit, I mean both fancy, and tenderness, and some happy expressions, in them, I think they well deserve that you should revise them carefully, and polish them to the utmost. This I am sure you can do if you please, for you have great command both of expression and of rhymes; and you may judge from the two last pieces of Mrs. Hunter's poetry, that I gave you, how much correctness and high polish enhance the value of such compositions. As you desire it, I shall, with great freedom, give you my *most rigorous* criticisms on your verses. I wish you would give me another edition of them, much amended, and I will send it to Mrs. Hunter, who I am sure will have much pleasure in reading it. Pray give me likewise for myself, and her too, a copy (as much amended as you please) of the *Water Fowl on Loch Turit.*

The *Wounded Hare* is a pretty good subject; but the measure or stanza you have chosen for it, is not a good one: it does not *flow* well; and the rhyme of the fourth line is almost lost by its distance from the first; and the two interposed, close rhymes. If I were you, I would put it into a different stanza yet.

Stanza 1. The execrations in the first two lines, are too strong or coarse; but they may pass. "Murder-aiming" is a bad compound epithet, and not very intelligible. "Blood-stained," in stanza iii. line 4, has the same fault: *bleeding* bosom is infinitely better. You have accustomed yourself to such epithets, and have no notion how stiff and quaint they appear to others, and how incongruous with poetic fancy, and tender sentiments. Suppose Pope had written, "Why that blood-stained bosom gored," how would you have liked it? *Form* is neither a poetic, nor a dignified, nor a plain, common word: it is a mere sportsman's word; unsuitable to pathetic or serious poetry.

"Mangled" is a coarse word. "Innocent" in this scene is a nursery word: but both may pass.

Stanza 4. "Who will now provide that life a mother only can bestow," will not do at all: it is not grammar—it is not intelligible. Do you mean "provide for that life which the mother had bestowed and used to provide for?"

There was a ridiculous slip of the pen, "Feeling" (I suppose) for "Fellow," in the title of your copy of verses; but even fellow would be wrong: it is but a colloquial and vulgar word, unsuitable to your sentiments. "Sh-t" is improper too.—On seeing a *person* (or a sportsman) wound a hare; it is needless to add with what weapon: but if you think otherwise, you should say, *with a fowling-piece.*

Let me see you when you come to town, and I will shew you some more of Mrs. Hunter's poems*.

No. LXXIV.

To Mr. M'AULEY, *of Dumbarton.*

Dear sir, *4th June*, 1789.

Though I am not without my fears respecting my fate, at that grand, universal inquest of right and wrong, commonly called *The Last Day*, yet I trust there is one sin, which that arch vagabond, Satan, who I understand is to be king's evidence, cannot throw in my teeth, I mean ingratitude. There is a certain pretty large quantum of kindness for which I remain, and, from inability, I fear must still remain, your debtor; but though unable to repay the debt, I assure you, sir, I shall ever warmly remember the obligation. It gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear by my old acquaintance, Mr. Kennedy, that you are, in immortal Allan's language, "Hale and weel, and living;" and that your charming family are well, and promising to be an amiable and respectable addition to the company of performers, whom the Great Manager of the drama of Man is bringing into action for the succeeding age.

With respect to my welfare, a subject in which you once warmly and effectively interested yourself, I am here in my old way, holding my plough, marking the growth of my corn, or the health of my dairy; and at times sauntering by the delightful windings of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for seasonable weather, or holding an intrigue with the muses; the only gipseys with whom I have now any intercourse. As I am entered into the holy state of matrimony, I trust my face is turned completely Zion-ward; and as it is a rule with all honest fellows, to repeat no grievances, I hope that the little poetic licences of former days, will of course fall under the oblivious influence of some good-natured statute of celestial proscription. In my family devotion, which, like a good presbyterian, I occasionally give to my household folks, I am extremely fond of the psalm, "Let not the errors of my youth, &c." and that other, "Lo children are God's heritage, &c." in which last, Mrs. Burns, who, by the bye, has a glorious "wood-note wild" at either old song or psalmody, joins me with the pathos of Handel's Messiah.

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* It must be admitted, that this criticism is not more distinguished by its good sense, than by its freedom from ceremony. It is impossible not to smile at the manner in which the poet may be supposed to have received it. In fact it appears, as the sailors say, to have thrown him *quite aback.* In a letter which he wrote soon after, he says, "Dr. G—— is a good man, but he crucifies me." —And again, "I believe in the iron justice of Dr. G—; but, like the devils, I believe and tremble." However, he profited by these criticisms, as the reader will find, by comparing this first edition of the poem, with that published among the *Poems.* E.

No. LXXV.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Dear madam, *Ellisland, 21st June*, 1789.

Will you take the effusions, the miserable effusions of low spirits, just as they flow from their bitter spring? I know not of any particular cause for this worst of all my foes besetting me, but for some time my soul has been beclouded with a thickening atmosphere of evil imaginations and gloomy presages.

* * * * * *

Monday evening.

I have just heard * * * * * give a sermon. He is a man famous for his benevolence, and I revere him; but from such ideas of my Creator, good Lord deliver me! Religion, my honoured friend, is surely a simple business, as it equally concerns the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich. That there is an incomprehensibly Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery, and consequent outward deportment of this creature which he has made; these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and consequently that I am an accountable creature; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay, positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave; must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther, and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though, *to appearance* he himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species; therefore, Jesus Christ was from God.

* * * * * * * *

Whatever mitigates the woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, madam, of my creed? I trust that I have said nothing that will lessen me in the eye of one, whose good opinion I value almost next to the approbation of my own mind.

No. LXXVI.

From Dr. MOORE.

Dear sir, *Clifford-street, 10th June*, 1789.

I thank you for the different communications you have made me of your occasional productions in manuscript, all of which have merit, and some of them merit of a different kind from what appears in the poems you have published. You ought carefully to preserve all your occasional productions, to correct and improve them at your leisure; and when you can select as many of these as will make a volume, publish it either at Edinburgh or London, by subscription: on such an occasion, it may be in my power, as it is very much in my inclination, to be of service to you.

If I were to offer an opinion, it would be, that in your future productions you should abandon the Scottish stanza and dialect, and adopt the measure and language of modern English poetry.

The stanza which you use in imitation of *Christ kirk on the green*, with the tiresome repetition of "that day," is fatiguing to English ears, and I should think not very agreeable to Scottish.

All the fine satire and humour of your *Holy Fair* is lost on the English; yet without more trouble to yourself, you could have conveyed the whole to them. The same is true of some of your other poems. In your *Epistle to J. S———*, the stanzas, from that beginning with this line, "This life, so far's I understand," to that which ends with, "Short while it grieves," are easy, flowing, gaily philosophical, and of Horatian elegance—the language is English, with a *few* Scottish words, and some of those so harmonious, as to add to the beauty; for what poet would not prefer *gloaming* to *twilight?*

I imagine, that by carefully keeping, and occasionally polishing and correcting those verses, which the muse dictates, you will, within a year or two, have another volume as large as the first, ready for the press; and this, without diverting you from every proper attention to the study and practice of husbandry, in which I understand you are very learned, and which I fancy you will choose to adhere to as a wife, while poetry amuses you from time to time, as a mistress. The former, like a prudent wife, must not shew ill humour, although you retain a sneaking kindness to this agreeable gipsey, and pay her occasional visits, which in no manner alienates your heart from your lawful spouse, but tend on the contrary to promote her interest.

I desired Mr. Cadell to write to Mr. Creech to send you a copy of *Zeluco*. This performance has had great success here, but I shall be glad to have your opinion of it, because I value your opinion, and because I know you are above saying what you do not think.

I beg you will offer my best wishes to my very good friend, Mrs. Hamilton, who I understand is your neighbour. If she is as happy as I wish her, she is happy enough. Make my compliments also to Mrs. Burns, and believe me to be, with sincere esteem,

Dear sir, yours, &c.

No. LXXVII.

From Miss J. LITTLE.

Sir, *Loudon House, 12th July*, 1789.

Though I have not the happiness of being personally acquainted with you, yet amongst the num-

ber of those who have read and admired your publications, may I be permitted to trouble you with this? You must know, sir, I am somewhat in love with the muses, though I cannot boast of any favours they have deigned to confer upon me as yet; my situation in life has been very much against me as to that. I have spent some years in and about Ecclefechan (where my parents reside), in the station of a servant, and am now come to London house, at present possessed by Mrs. H——: she is daughter to Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop, whom I understand you are particularly acquainted with. As I had the pleasure of perusing your poems, I felt a partiality for the author, which I should not have experienced had you been in a more dignified station. I wrote a few verses of address to you, which I did not then think of ever presenting; but as fortune seems to have favoured me in this, by bringing me into a family, by whom you are well known, and much esteemed, and where perhaps I may have an opportunity of seeing you; I shall, in hopes of your future friendship, take the liberty to transcribe them.

. . . . . .

Fair fa' the honest rustic swain,
The pride o' a' our Scottish plain:
Thou gi'es us joy to hear thy strain,
And notes sae sweet:
Old Ramsay's shade reviv'd again
In thee we greet.

Lov'd Thalia, that delightfu' muse,
Seem'd lang shut up as a recluse;
To all she did her aid refuse,
Since Allan's day:
'Till Burns arose, then did she choose
To grace his lay.

To hear thy sang all ranks desire,
Sae weel you strike the dormant lyre;
Apollo with poetic fire
Thy breast does warm;
And critics silently admire
Thy art to charm.

Cæsar and Luath weel can speak,
'Tis pity e'er their gabs should steek,
But into human nature keek,
And knots unravel:
To hear their lectures once a week,
Nine miles I'd travel.

Thy dedication to G. H.
An unco bonnie hamespun speech,
Wi' winsome glee the heart can teach
A better lesson,
Than servile bards, who fawn and fleech
Like beggar's messon.

When slighted love becomes your theme,
And women's faithless vows you blame;
With so much pathos you exclaim,
In your lament;
But, glanced by the most frigid dame,
She would relent.

The daisy too ye sing wi' skill;
And weel ye praise the whisky gill:
In vain I blunt my feckless quill,
Your fame to raise;
While echo sounds from ilka hill,
To Burns's praise.

Did Addison or Pope but hear,
Or Sam, that critic most severe,
A ploughboy sing with throat sae clear,
They in a rage
Their works would a' in pieces tear,
And curse your page.

Sure Milton's eloquence were faint,
The beauties of your verse to paint;
My rude unpolish'd strokes but taint
Their brilliancy;
Th' attempt would doubtless vex a saint,
And weel may thee.

The task I'll drop; with heart sincere
To heaven present my humble pray'r,
That all the blessings mortals share,
May be by turns
Dispens'd by an indulgent care,
To Robert Burns.

. . . . . .

Sir, I hope you will pardon my boldness in this; my hand trembles while I write to you, conscious of my unworthiness of what I would most earnestly solicit, viz. your favour and friendship; yet hoping you will shew yourself possessed of as much generosity and good nature as will prevent your exposing what may justly be found liable to censure in this measure, I shall take the liberty to subscribe myself,

Sir, your most obedient humble servant,
JANET LITTLE.

P. S. If you would condescend to honour me with a few lines from your hand, I would take it as a particular favour, and direct to me at Loudon house, near *Galsloc*.

No. LXXVIII.

From Mr. ******.

My dear sir, *London, 5th August*, 1789.

Excuse me when I say, that the uncommon abilities which you possess, must render your correspondence very acceptable to any one. I can assure you, I am particularly proud of your partiality, and shall endeavour, by every method in my power, to merit a continuance of your politeness.

* * * * * * *

When you can spare a few moments, I should be proud of a letter from you, directed for me, Gerrard-street, Soho.

* * * * * * *

I cannot express my happiness sufficiently at the instance of your attachment to my late inestimable friend, Bob Fergusson, who was particularly intimate with myself and relations*. While I recollect with pleasure his extraordinary talents, and many amiable qualities, it affords me the greatest consolation, that I am honoured with the correspondence of his successor, in national simplicity and genius. That Mr. Burns has refined in the art of poetry, must readily be admitted; but notwithstanding many favourable representations, I am yet to learn that he inherits his convivial powers.

There was such a richness of conversation, such a plenitude of fancy and attraction in him, that when I call the happy period of our intercourse to my memory, I feel myself in a state of delirium. I was then younger than him by eight or ten years, but his manner was so felicitous, that he enraptured every person around him, and infused into the hearts of the young and old, the spirit and animation which operated on his own mind.

I am, dear sir, yours, &c.

No. LXXIX.

To Mr. ******,

In answer to the foregoing.

My dear sir,

The hurry of a farmer in this particular season, and the indolence of a poet at all times and seasons, will, I hope, plead my excuse for neglecting so long to answer your obliging letter of the fifth of August.

That you have done well in quitting your laborious concern in * * * * I do not doubt; the weighty reasons you mention, were, I hope, very, and deservedly indeed, weighty ones, and your health is a matter of the last importance; but whether the remaining proprietors of the paper have also done well, is what I much doubt. The * * * *, so far as I was a reader, exhibited such a brilliancy of point, such an eleganee of paragraph, and such a variety of intelligence, that I can hardly conceive it possible to continue a daily paper in the same degree of excellence; but if there was a man who had abilities equal to the task, that man's assistance the proprietors have lost.

* * * * * * * * *

When I received your letter I was transcribing for * * * *, my letter to the magistrates of the Canongate, Edinburgh, begging their permission to place a tomb-stone over poor Fergusson, and their ediet in consequence of my petition, but now I shall send them to * * * * * * *. Poor Fergusson! If there be a life beyond the grave, which I trust there is; and if there be a good God presiding over all nature, which I am sure there is; thou art now enjoying existence in a glorious world, where worth of the heart alone is distinction in the man; where riches, deprived of all their pleasure-purchasing powers, return to their native sordid matter; where titles and honours are the disregarded reveries of an idle dream; and where that heavy virtue, which is the negative consequence of steady dulness, and those thoughtless, though often destructive follies, which are the unavoidable aberrations of frail human nature, will be thrown into equal oblivion as if they had never been!

Adieu, my dear sir! So soon as your present views and schemes are concentred in an aim, I shall be glad to hear from you; as your welfare and happiness is by no means a subject indifferent to

Yours, &c.

* The erection of a monument to him. E.

No. LXXX.

To Miss WILLIAMS.

Madam, 1789.

Of the many problems in the nature of that wonderful creature, man, this is one of the most extraordinary, that he shall go on from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, or perhaps from year to year, suffering a hundred times more in an hour from the impotent conscionsness of neglecting what he ought to do, than the very doing of it would cost him. I am deeply indebted to you, first for a most elegant poetic compliment*; then for a polite, obliging letter; and lastly for your excellent poem on the Slave-trade; and yet, wretch that I am! though the debts were debts of honour, and the creditor a lady, I have put off and put off even the very acknowledgment of the obligation, until you must indeed be the very angel I take you for, if you can forgive me.

Your poem I have read with the highest pleasure. I have a way, whenever I read a book, I mean a book in our own trade, madam, a poetic one, and when it is my own property, that I take a pencil and mark at the ends of verses, or note on margins and odd paper, little criticisms of approbation or disapprobation as I peruse along. I will make no apology for presenting you with a few unconnected thoughts that occurred to me in my repeated perusals of your poem. I want to shew you that I have honesty enough to tell you what I take to be truths, even when they are not quite on the side of approbation; and I do it in the firm faith that you have equal greatness of mind to hear them with pleasure.

I had lately the honour of a letter from Dr. Moore, where he tells me that he has sent me some books. They are not yet come to hand, but I hear they are on the way.

Wishing you all success in your progress in the path of fame; and that you may equally escape the danger of stumbling through incautious speed, or losing ground through loitering neglect,

I have the honour to be, &c.

* See page 154.

No. LXXXI.

From Miss WILLIAMS.

Dear sir, *7th August*, 1789.

I do not lose a moment in returning you my sincere acknowledgments for your letter, and your criticism on my poem, which is a very flattering proof that you have read it with attention. I think your objections are perfectly just, except in one instance——

* * * * * * * *

You have indeed been very profuse of panegyric on my little performance. A much less portion of applause from *you*, would have been gratifying to me; since I think its value depends entirely upon the source from whence it proceeds—the incense of praise, like other incense, is more grateful from the quality, than the quantity of the odour.

I hope you still cultivate the pleasures of poetry, which are precious even independent of the rewards of fame. Perhaps the most valuable property of poetry is its power of disengaging the mind from worldly cares, and leading the imagination to the richest springs of intellectual enjoyment; since however frequently life may be chequered with gloomy scenes, those who truly love the muse, can always find one little path adorned with flowers and cheered by sunshine.

* * * * * *

No. LXXXII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Dear madam, *Ellisland, 6th Sept.* 1789.

I have mentioned in my last, my appointment to the excise, and the birth of little Frank; who, by the bye, I trust will be no discredit to the honourable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance, and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older; and likewise an excellent good temper, though when he pleases he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling bridge.

I had, some time ago, an epistle, part poetic, and part prosaic, from your poetess, Mrs. J. L—, a very ingenious, but modest composition. I should have written her as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country; and I am happy to add, always to the honour of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or, which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August, struck me with the most melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present.

* * * * * * *

Would I could write you a letter of comfort! I would sit down to it with as much pleasure, as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition, that should equal the *Iliad*. Religion, my dear friend, is the true comfort! A strong persuasion in a future state of existence; a proposition so obviously probable, that, setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least near four thousand years, have, in some mode or other, firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch; but when I reflected, that I was opposing the most ardent wishes, and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief, in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines, or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favourite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life, in the language of the book of Job,

"Against the day of battle and of war"—

spoken of religion.

"'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night.
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction, or repels his dart;
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies."

I have been very busy with *Zeluco*. The doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion of it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel-writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall however digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. *Zeluco* is a most sterling performance.

Farewell! *A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende!*

No. LXXXIII.

From Dr. BLACKLOCK.

Edinburgh, 24th August, 1789.

Dear Burns, thou brother of my heart,
Both for thy virtues and thy art;
If art it may be call'd in thee
Which nature's bounty large and free,
With pleasure on thy breast diffuses,
And warms thy soul with all the muses.
Whether to laugh with easy grace,
Thy numbers move the sage's face,

Or bid the softer passions rise,
And ruthless souls with grief surprise,
'Tis nature's voice distinctly felt,
Thro' thee her organ. thus to melt.
Most anxiously I wish to know,
With thee of late how matters go;
How keeps thy much lov'd Jean her health?
What promises thy farm of wealth?
Whether the muse persists to smile,
And all thy anxious cares beguile?
Whether bright fancy keeps alive?
And how thy darling infants thrive?
For me, with grief and sickness spent,
Since I my journey homeward bent,
Spirits depressed no more I mourn,
But vigour, life, and health return.
No more to gloomy thoughts a prey,
I sleep all night, and live all day;
By turns my book and friend enjoy,
And thus my circling hours employ;
Happy while yet these hours remain,
If Burns could join the cheerful train,
With wonted zeal, sincere and fervent,
Salute once more his humble servant,

THO. BLACKLOCK.

No. LXXXIV.

To Dr. BLACKLOCK.

Ellisland, 21*st October*, 1789.

Wow, but your letter made me vauntie!
And are ye hale, and weel, and cantie?
I ken'd it still your wee bit jauntie
Wad bring ye to:
Lord send you aye as weel's I want ye,
And then ye'll do.

The ill-thief blaw the Heron south!
And never drink be near his drouth!
He tald mysel by word o' mouth,
He'd tak my letter;
I lippen'd to the chiel in trouth,
And bade nae better.

But aiblins honest Master Heron
Had at the time some dainty fair one,
To ware his theologie care on,
And holy study;
And, tired o' sauls to waste his lear on,
E'en tried the body*.

But what d'ye think, my trusty fier,
I'm turn'd a gauger—Peace be here!
Parnassian queens, I fear, I fear,
Ye'll now disdain me,
And then my fifty pounds a-year
Will little gain me.

Ye glaiket, gleesome, dainty damies,
Wha by Castalia's wimplin streamies,
Lowp, sing, and lave your pretty limbies,
Ye ken, ye ken,
That strang necessity supreme is
'Mang sons o' men.

I hae a wife and twa wee laddies,
They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies;
Ye ken yourscls my heart right proud is,
I need na vaunt,
But I'll sned besoms—thraw saugh woodies,
Before they want.

Lord help me thro' this warld o' care!
I'm weary sick o't late and air!
Not but I hae a richer share
Than mony ithers;
But why should ae man better fare,
And a' men brithers!

Come, *Firm Resolve*, take thou the van,
Thou stalk o' carl-hemp in man!
And let us mind, faint heart ne'er wan
A lady fair:
Wha does the utmost that he can,
Will whyles do mair.

But to conclude my silly rhyme,
(I'm scant o' verse, and scant o' time,)
To make a happy fire-side clime
To weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

My compliments to sister Beckie;
And eke the same to honest Lucky;
I wat she is a dainty chuckie,
As e'er tread clay!
And gratefully, my gude auld cockie,
I'm yours for aye.

ROBERT BURNS.

* Mr Heron, author of the History of Scotland, lately published; and, among various other works, of a respectable life of our poet himself. E.

No. LXXXV.

To R. GRAHAM, Esq. of FINTRY.

Sir, *9th December*, 1789.

I have a good while had a wish to trouble you with a letter, and had certainly done it long ere now—but for a humiliating something that throws cold water on the resolution, as if one should say, "You have found Mr. Graham a very powerful and kind friend indeed, and that interest he is so kindly taking in your concerns, you ought, by every thing in your power, to keep alive and cherish." Now though since God has thought proper to make one powerful and another helpless, the connexion of obliger and obliged is all fair; and though my being under your patronage is to me highly honourable, yet, sir, allow me to flatter myself, that, as a poet and an honest man, you first interested yourself in my welfare, and principally as such still, you permit me to approach you.

I have found the excise business go on a great deal smoother with me than I expected; owing a good deal to the generous friendship of Mr. Mitchel, my collector, and the kind assistance of Mr.

Findlater, my supervisor. I dare to be honest, and I fear no labour. Nor do I find my hurried life greatly inimical to my correspondence with the muses. Their visits to me, indeed, and I believe to most of their acquaintance, like the visits of good angels, are short and far between: but I meet them now and then as I jog through the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr. I take the liberty to inclose you a few bagatelles, all of them the productions of my leisure thoughts in my excise rides.

If you know or have ever seen captain Grose, the antiquarian, you will enter into any humour that is in the verses on him. Perhaps you have seen them before, as I sent them to a London newspaper. Though I dare say you have none of the solemn-league-and-covenant fire, which shone so conspicuous in lord George Gordon, and the Kilmarnock weavers, yet, I think, you must have heard of Dr. M'Gill, one of the clergymen of Ayr, and his heretical book. God help him, poor man! Though he is one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest of the whole priesthood of the kirk of Scotland, in every sense of that ambiguous term, yet the poor doctor and his numerous family are in imminent danger of being thrown out to the mercy of the winter-winds. The inclosed ballad on that business is I confess too local, but I laughed myself at some conceits in it, though I am convinced in my conscience that there are a good many heavy stanzas in it too.

The election ballad, as you will see, alludes to the present canvass in our string of boroughs. I do not believe there will be such a hard run match in the whole general election*.

* * * * * *

I am too little a man to have any political attachments; I am deeply indebted to, and have the warmest veneration for, individuals of both parties, but a man, who has it in his power to be the father of a country, and who * * * * * * is a character that one cannot speak of with patience.

Sir J. J. does "what man can do," but yet I doubt his fate.

* * * * * * *

No. LXXXVI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 13th December, 1789.

Many thanks, dear madam, for your sheet-full of rhymes. Though, at present, I am below the veriest prose, yet from you every thing pleases. I am groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system; a system, the state of which is most conducive to our happiness—or the most productive of our misery. For now near three weeks, I have been so ill with a nervous head-ache, that I have been obliged to give up, for a time, my excise-books, being scarce able to lift my head, much less to ride once a week over ten muir parishes. What is man! To-day, in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence; in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter. Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life, is a something at which he recoils.

"Tell us, ye dead! will none of you in pity
Disclose the secret————
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be!
————'tis no matter:
A little time will make us learn'd as you are."

Can it be possible, that when I resign this frail, feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence! When the last gasp of agony has announced, that I am no more to those that knew me, and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles, and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I yet be warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed? Ye venerable sages, and holy flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories, of another world beyond death; or are they all alike, baseless visions, and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane; what a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it! There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world, against which he so long and so bravely struggled. There should I meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life; the man who rejoiced to see me, because he loved me and could serve me.——Muir! thy weaknesses were the aberrations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with every thing generous, manly, and noble; and if ever emanation from the All-good Being animated a human form, it was thine!—There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my lost, my ever-dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honour, constancy, and love.

My Mary, dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of heavenly rest?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

. . . . . .

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters! I trust thou art no impostor, and that thy revelation of blissful scenes of existence beyond death and the grave, is not one of the many impositions,

* This alludes to the contest for the borough of Dumfries, betwen the duke of Queensberry's interest and that of sir James Johnstone.

E.

which time after time have been palmed on credulous mankind. I trust that in thee "shall all the families of the earth be blessed," by being yet connected together in a better world, where every tie that bound heart to heart, in this state of existence, shall be, far beyond our present conceptions, more endearing.

I am a good deal inclined to think with those who maintain, that what are called nervous affections are in fact diseases of the mind. I cannot reason, I cannot think; and but to you I would not venture to write any thing above an order to a cobler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch, who is impaired more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl, which the writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire, were he able to write any thing better, or indeed any thing at all.

Rumour told me something of a son of yours, who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news of James or Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know; as I promise you, on the sincerity of a man, who is weary of one world and anxious about another, that scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good thing befalling my honoured friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre miserable*.

R. B.

No. LXXXVII.

To SIR JOHN SINCLAIR.

Sir,

The following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the statistical account, transmitted to you, of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithsdale. I beg leave to send it to you, because it is new, and may be useful. How far it is deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge, is certainly of very great importance, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides, raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddel, Esq. of Glenriddel, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful, as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan, a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr. Riddel got a number of his own tenants, and farming neighbours, to form themselves into a society for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement to abide by it for three years; with a saving clause or two, in case of removal to a distance, or of death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings; and at each of their meetings, which were held every fourth Saturday, sixpence more. With their entry money, and the credit which they took on the faith of their future funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the commencement. What authors they were to purchase, was always decided by the majority. At every meeting, all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures, by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of the volumes in rotation. He, whose name stood, for that night, first on the list, had his choice of what volume he pleased in the whole collection; the second had his choice after the first; the third after the second, and so on to the last. At next meeting, he who had been first on the list at the preceding meeting, was last at this; he who had been second was first; and so on through the whole three years. At the expiration of the engagement, the books were sold by auction, but only among the members themselves; and each man had his share of the common stock, in money or in books, as he chose to be a purchaser or not.

At the breaking up of this little society, which was formed under Mr. Riddel's patronage, what with benefactions of books from him, and what with their own purchases, they had collected together upwards of one hundred and fifty volumes. It will easily be guessed, that a good deal of trash would be bought. Among the books, however, of this little library, were, *Blair's Sermons*, *Robertson's History of Scotland*, *Hume's History of the Stewarts*, *The Spectator*, *Idler*, *Adventurer*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Observer*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, *Chrysal*, *Don Quixote*, *Joseph Andrews*, *&c.* A peasant, who can read and enjoy such books, is certainly a much superior being to his neighbour, who perhaps stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives.

Wishing your patriotic exertions their so much merited success,

I am, sir,
Your humble servant,
A PEASANT*.

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* The above is extracted from the third volume of sir John Sinclair's Statistics, p. 598.—It was inclosed to sir John, by Mr. Riddel himself, in the following letter, also printed there.

"Sir John,

"I inclose you a letter, written by Mr. Burns, as an addition to the account of Dunscore parish. It contains an account of a small library, which he was so good (at my deisre) as to set on foot, in the barony of Monkland, or Friar's Carse, in this parish. As its utility has been felt, particularly among the younger class of people, I think, that if a similar plan were established, in the different parishes of Scotland, it would tend greatly to the speedy improvement of the tenantry, trades-people, and work-people. Mr. Burns was so good as to take the whole charge of this small concern.

No. LXXXVIII.

TO CHARLES SHARP, Esq.

OF HODDAM.

Under a fictitious signature, inclosing a ballad, 1790 *or* 1791.

It is true, sir, you are a gentleman of rank and fortune, and I am a poor devil: you are a feather in the cap of society, and I am a very hobnail in his shoes; yet I have the honour to belong to the same family with you, and on that score I now address you. You will perhaps suspect that I am going to claim affinity with the ancient and honourable house of Kilpatrick? No, no, sir: I cannot, indeed, be properly said to belong to any house, or even any province or kingdom; as my mother, who for many years was spouse to a marching regiment, gave me into this bad world, aboard the packet-boat, somewhere between Donaghadee and Portpatrick. By our common family, I mean, sir, the family of the muses. I am a fiddler and a poet; and you, I am told, play an exquisite violin, and have a standard taste in the belles lettres. The other day, a brother catgut gave me a charming Scots air of your composition. If I was pleased with the tune, I was in raptures with the title you have given it; and taking up the idea, I have spun it into the three stanzas inclosed. Will you allow me, sir, to present you them, as the dearest offering that a misbegotten son of poverty and rhyme has to give? I have a longing to take you by the hand and unburthen my heart by saying, "sir, I honour you as a man, who supports the dignity of human nature, amid an age, when frivolity and avarice have, between them, debased us below the brutes that perish!" But, alas! sir, to me you are unapproachable. It is true, the muses baptized me in Castalian streams, but the thoughtless gipsies forgot to give me a name. As the sex have served many a good fellow, the nine have given me a great deal of pleasure, but, bewitching jades! they have beggared me. Would they but spare me a little of their cast-linen! were it only to put it in my power to say, that I have a shirt on my back! But the idle wenches, like Solomon's lilies, "they toil not, neither do they spin;" so I must e'en continue to tie my remnant of a cravat, like the hangman's rope, round my naked throat, and coax my galligaskins to keep together their many-coloured fragments. As to the affair of shoes, I have given that up.—My pilgrimages in my ballad-trade, from town to town, and on your stony-hearted turnpikes too, are what not even the hide of Job's behemoth could bear. The coat on my back is no more: I shall not speak evil of the dead. It would be equally unhandsome and ungrateful to find fault with my old surtout, which so kindly supplies and conceals the want of that coat. My hat, indeed, is a great favourite; and though I got it literally for an old song, I would not exchange it for the best beaver in Britain. I was, during several years, a kind of fac-totum servant to a country clergyman, where I pickt up a good many scraps of learning, particularly in some branches of the mathematics. Whenever I feel inclined to rest myself on my way, I take my seat under a hedge, laying my poetic wallet on the one side, and my fiddle-case on the other, and, placing my hat between my legs, I can, by means of its brim, or rather brims, go through the whole doctrine of the conic sections.

However, sir, don't let me mislead you, as if I would interest your pity. Fortune has so much forsaken me, that she has taught me to live without her; and amid all my rags and poverty, I am as independent, and much more happy, than a monarch of the world. According to the hackneyed metaphor, I value the several actors in the great drama of life, simply as they act their parts. I can look on a worthless fellow of a duke with unqualified contempt; and can regard an honest scavenger with sincere respect. As you, sir, go through your role with such distinguished merit, permit me to make one in the chorus of universal applause, and assure you that, with the highest respect,

I have the honour to be, &c.

No. LXXXIX.

To Mr. GILBERT BURNS.

Ellisland, 11th January, 1790.

Dear brother,

I mean to take advantage of the frank, though I have not, in my present frame of mind, much appetite for exertion in writing. My nerves are in a * * * * state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself. It is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go to ****! I'll fight it out and be off with it.

We have gotten a set of very decent players here just now. I have seen them an evening or two. David Campbell, in Ayr, wrote to me by the manager of the company, a Mr. Sutherland, who is a man of apparent worth. On new-year-day evening I gave him the following prologue, which he spouted to his audience with applause.

No song nor dance I bring from yon great city,
That queens it o'er our taste—the more's the pity:
Tho', by the bye, abroad why will you roam?
Good sense and taste are natives here at home:
But not for panegyric I appear,
I come to wish you all a good new year!

He was treasurer, librarian, and censor, to this little society, who will long have a grateful sense of his public spirit and exertions for their improvement and information.

I have the honour to be, sir John,
Yours most sincerely,
ROBERT RIDDEL.

"*To sir John Sinclair, of Ulbster, Bart.*"

Old Father Time deputes me here before ye,
Not for to preach, but tell his simple story:
The sage grave ancient cough'd, and bade me say,
"You're one year older this important day;"
If *wiser too*—he hinted some suggestion,
But 'twould be rude, you know, to ask the question;
And with a would-be-roguish leer and wink,
He bade me on you press this one word—"*think!*"

Ye sprightly youths, quite flush with hope and spirit,
Who think to storm the world by dint of merit,
To you the dotard has a deal to say,
In his sly, dry, sententious, proverb way!
He bids you mind, amid your thoughtless rattle,
That the first blow is ever half the battle;
That tho' some by the skirt may try to snatch him,
Yet by the forelock is the hold to catch him;
That, whether doing, suffering, or forbearing,
You may do miracles by persevering.

Last, tho' not least in love, ye youthful fair,
Angelic forms, high Heaven's peculiar care!
To you old Bald-pate smooths his wrinkled brow,
And humbly begs you'll mind the important—*now!*
To crown your happiness he asks your leave,
And offers, bliss to give and to receive.

For our sincere, tho' haply weak endeavours,
With grateful pride we own your many favours;
And howsoe'er our tongues may ill reveal it,
Believe our glowing bosoms truly feel it.

. . . . . .

I can no more.—If once I was clear of this **** farm, I should respire more at ease.

No. XC.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 25th January, 1790.

It has been owing to unremitting hurry of business that I have not written to you, madam, long ere now. My health is greatly better, and I now begin once more to share in satisfaction and enjoyment with the rest of my fellow-creatures.

Many thanks, my much-esteemed friend, for your kind letters; but why will you make me run the risk of being contemptible and mercenary in my own eyes? When I pique myself on my independent spirit, I hope it is neither poetic licence, nor poetic rant; and I am so flattered with the honour you have done me, in making me your compeer in friendship and friendly correspondence, that I cannot without pain, and a degree of mortification, be reminded of the real inequality between our situations.

Most sincerely do I rejoice with you, dear madam, in the good news of Anthony. Not only your anxiety about his fate, but my own esteem for such a noble, warm-hearted, manly young fellow, in the little I had of his acquaintance, has interested me deeply in his fortunes.

Falconer, the unfortunate author of the *Shipwreck*, which you so much admire, is no more. After weathering the dreadful catastrophe he so feelingly describes in his poem, and after weathering many hard gales of fortune, he went to the bottom with the Aurora frigate! I forget what part of Scotland had the honour of giving him birth, but he was the son of obscurity and misfortune*. He was one of those daring adventurous spirits, which Scotland beyond any other country is remarkable for producing. Little does the fond mother think, as she hangs delighted over the sweet little leech at her bosom, where the poor fellow may hereafter wander, and what may be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old Scottish ballad, which, notwithstanding its rude simplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart:

"Little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
What land I was to travel in,
Or what death I should die!"

Old Scottish songs are, you know, a favourite study and pursuit of mine, and now I am on that subject, allow me to give you two stanzas of another old simple ballad, which I am sure will please you. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruined female, lamenting her fate. She concludes with this pathetic wish:

"O that my father had ne'er on me smil'd;
O that my mother had ne'er to me sung!
O that my cradle had never been rock'd;
But that I had died when I was young!

---

* Falconer was in early life a sea-boy, to use a word of Shakspeare, on board a man of war, in which capacity he attracted the notice of Campbell, the author of the satire on Dr. Johnson, entitled *Lexiphanes*, then purser of the ship. Campbell took him as his servant, and delighted in giving him instruction; and when Falconer afterwards acquired celebrity, boasted of him as his scholar. The editor had this information from a surgeon of a man of war, in 1777, who knew both Campbell and Falconer, and who himself perished soon after by shipwreck, on the coast of America.

Though the death of Falconer happened so lately as 1770 or 1771, yet in the biography prefixed by Dr. Anderson to his works, in the complete edition of the *Poets of Great Britain*, it is said, "of the family, birth-place, and education of William Falconer, there are no memorials." On the authority already given, it may be mentioned, that he was a native of one of the towns on the coast of Fife, and that his parents, who had suffered some misfortunes, removed to one of the sea-ports of England, where they both died soon after of an epidemic fever, leaving poor Falconer, then a boy, forlorn and destitute. In consequence of which he entered on board a man of war. These last circumstances are however less certain.

F.

O that the grave it were my bed;
My blankets were my winding sheet;
The clocks and the worms my bedfellows a';
And O sae sound as I should sleep!'"

I do not remember, in all my reading, to have met with any thing more truly the language of misery, than the exclamation in the last line. Misery is like love; to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little godson* the small-pox. They are *rife* in the country, and I tremble for his fate. By the way I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him, acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest, and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of his head, and the glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry until you are tired of it, next time I have the honour of assuring you how truly I am, &c.

No. XCI.

From Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

28th January, 1790.

In some instances it is reckoned unpardonable to quote any one's own words, but the value I have for your friendship, nothing can more truly or more elegantly express than

"Time but the impression stronger makes,
As streams their channels deeper wear."

Having written to you twice without having heard from you, I am apt to think my letters have miscarried. My conjecture is only framed upon the chapter of accidents turning up against me, as it too often does, in the trivial, and I may with truth add, the more important affairs of life; but I shall continue occasionally to inform you what is going on among the circle of your friends in these parts. In these days of merriment, I have frequently heard your name *proclaimed* at the jovial board—under the roof of our hospitable friend at Stenhouse-mills, there were no

"Lingering moments number'd with care."

I saw your *Address to the New-Year*, in the Dumfries Journal. Of your productions I shall say nothing; but my acquaintances allege, that when your name is mentioned, which every man of celebrity must know often happens, I am the champion, the Mendoza, against all snarling critics, and narrow-minded reptiles, of whom *a few* on this planet do *crawl*.

With best compliments to your wife, and her black-eyed sister, I remain, yours, &c.

* The bard's second son, Francis.

No. XCII.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 13*th February*, 1790.

I beg your pardon, my dear and much valued friend, for writing to you on this very unfashionable, unsightly sheet—

"My poverty but not my will consents."

But to make amends, since of modish post I have none, except one poor widowed half-sheet of gilt, which lies in my drawer among my plebeian fool's-cap pages, like the widow of a man of fashion, whom that unpolite scoundrel, Necessity, has driven from burgundy and pine-apple, to a dish of bohea with the scandal-bearing help-mate of a village priest; or a glass of whiskey toddy, with the ruby-nosed yoke-fellow of a foot-padding exciseman—I make a vow to inclose this sheet-full of epistolary fragments in that my only scrap of gilt-paper.

I am, indeed, your unworthy debtor for three friendly letters. I ought to have written to you long ere now, but it is a literal fact, I have scarcely a spare moment. It is not that I *will not* write to you; miss Burnet is not more dear to her guardian angel, nor his grace the duke of ********* to the powers of *******, than my friend Cunningham to me. It is not that I *cannot* write to you; should you doubt it, take the following fragment, which was intended for you some time ago, and be convinced that I can *antithesize* sentiment, and *circumvolute* periods, as well as any coiner of phrase in the regions of philology.

. . . . . .

December, 1789.

My dear Cunningham,

Where are you? And what are you doing? Can you be that son of levity, who takes up a friendship as he takes up a fashion; or are you, like some other of the worthiest fellows in the world, the victim of indolence, laden with fetters of ever-increasing weight?

What strange beings we are! Since we have a portion of conscious existence, equally capable of enjoying pleasure, happiness, and rapture, or of suffering pain, wretchedness, and misery, it is surely worthy of an inquiry, whether there be not such a thing as a science of life; whether method, economy, and fertility of expedients be not applicable to enjoyment; and whether there be not a want of dexterity in pleasure, which renders our little scantling of happiness still less; and a profuseness, an intoxication in bliss, which leads to satiety, disgust, and self-abhorrence. There is not a doubt but that health, talents, character, decent competency, respectable friends, are real substantial blessings; and yet do we not daily see those, who enjoy many or all of these good things, contrive, notwithstanding, to be as unhappy as others to whose lot few of them have fallen? I believe one great source of this mistake or misconduct is

owing to a certain stimulus, with us called ambition, which goads us up the hill of life, not as we ascend other eminences, for the laudable curiosity of viewing an extended landscape, but rather for the dishonest pride of looking down on others of our fellow creatures, seemingly diminutive in humbler stations, &c. &c.

. . . . . .

Sunday, 14*th February*, 1790.

God help me ! I am now obliged to join

"Night to day, and Sunday to the week."

If there be any truth in the orthodox faith of these churches, I am ****** past redemption, and what is worse, ****** to all eternity. I am deeply read in *Boston's Four-fold State*, *Marshal on Sanctification*, *Guthrie's Trial of a Saving Interest*, &c. but "There is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there," for me ; so I shall e'en turn Arminian, and trust to "Sincere, though imperfect obedience."

. . . . . .

Tuesday, 16*th*.

Luckily for me, I was prevented from the discussion of the knotty point at which I had just made a full stop. All my fears and cares are of this world ; if there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it. I hate a man that wishes to be a deist ; but I fear, every fair, unprejudiced inquirer, must in some degree be a sceptic. It is not that there are any very staggering arguments against the immortality of man ; but like electricity, phlogiston, &c. the subject is so involved in darkness, that we want data to go upon. One thing frightens me much : that we are to live for ever, seems *too good news to be true*. That we are to enter into a new scene of existence, where, exempt from want and pain, we shall enjoy ourselves and our friends without satiety or separation—how much should I be indebted to any one who could fully assure me that this was certain !

* * * * * * *

My time is once more expired. I will write to Mr. Cleghorn soon. God bless him and all his concerns ! And may all the powers that preside over conviviality and friendship, be present with all their kindest influence, when the bearer of this, Mr. Syme, and you meet ! I wish I could also make one—I think we should be * * * *.

Finally, brethren, farewell ! Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are gentle, whatsoever things are charitable, whatsoever things are kind, think on these things, and think on

ROBERT BURNS.

No. XCIII.

To Mr. HILL.

Ellisland, 2*d March*, 1790.

At a late meeting of the Monkland Friendly Society, it was resolved to augment their library by the following books, which you are to send us as soon as possible :—*The Mirror*, *The Lounger*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World* (these for my own sake I wish to have by the first carrier), *Knox's History of the Reformation ; Rae's History of the Rebellion in* 1715 ; any good *History of the Rebellion in* 1745 ; *A Display of the Secession Act and Testimony*, by Mr. Gib ; *Hervey's Meditations ; Beveridge's Thoughts ;* and another copy of *Watson's Body of Divinity*.

I wrote to Mr. A. Masterton three or four months ago, to pay some money he owed me, into your hands, and lately I wrote to you to the same purpose, but I have heard from neither the one nor other of you.

In addition to the books I commissioned in my last, I want very much, *An Index to the Excise Laws*, *or an Abridgment of all the Statutes now in force*, *relative to the Excise*, by Jellinger Symons ; I want three copies of this book : if it is now to be had, cheap or dear, get it for me. An honest country neighbour of mine wants too, *A Family Bible*, the larger the better, but second-handed, for he does not choose to give above ten shillings for the book. I want likewise for myself, as you can pick them up, second-handed or cheap, copies of *Otway's Dramatic Works*, *Ben Jonson's*, *Dryden's*, *Congreve's*, *Wycherly's*, *Vanbrugh's*, *Cibber's*, or any *Dramatic Works* of the more modern *Macklin*, *Garrick*, *Foote*, *Colman*, or *Sheridan*. A good copy too of *Moliere*, in French, I much want. Any other good dramatic authors in that language I want also ; but comic authors chiefly, though I should wish to have *Racine*, *Corneille*, and *Voltaire* too. I am in no hurry for all, or any of these, but if you accidentally meet with them very cheap, get them for me.

And now, to quit the dry walk of business, how do you do, my dear friend ? and how is Mrs. Hill ? I trust, if now and then not so *elegantly* handsome, at least as amiable, and sings as divinely as ever. My good wife, too, has a charming "wood-note wild ;" now could we four ———

* * * * * * *

I am out of all patience with this vile world, for one thing. Mankind are by nature benevolent creatures ; except in a few scoundrelly instances, I do not think that avarice of the good things we chance to have, is born with us ; but we are placed here, amid so much nakedness, and hunger, and poverty, and want, that we are under a cursed necessity of studying selfishness, in order that we may *exist !* Still there are, in every age, a few souls, that all the wants and woes of life cannot debase to selfishness, or even to the necessary al-

loy of caution and prudence. If ever I am in danger of vanity, it is when I contemplate myself on this side of my disposition and character. God knows I am no saint; I have a whole host of follies and sins to answer for; but if I could, and I believe I do it as far as I can, I would wipe away all tears from all eyes. Adieu!

No. XCIV.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 10th April, 1790.

I have just now, my ever-honoured friend, enjoyed a very high luxury, in reading a paper of the *Lounger*. You know my national prejudices. I had often read and admired the *Spectator*, *Adventurer*, *Rambler*, and *World*; but still with a certain regret, that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the union, that can counterbalance the annihilation of her independence, and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith—

> "—— States of native liberty possest,
> Tho' very poor, may yet be very blest."

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms, "English embassador, English court," &c. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, impeached by "the commons of England." Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe in my conscience such ideas as "my country; her independence; her honour; the illustrious names that mark the history of my native land;" &c.—I believe these, among your *men of the world*, men who, in fact, guide for the most part and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrongheadedness. They know the use of bawling out such terms, to rouse or lead *the rabble;* but for their own private use, with almost all the *able statesmen* that ever existed, or now exist, when they talk of right and wrong, they only mean proper and improper; and their measure of conduct is, not what they *ought*, but what they *dare*. For the truth of this, I shall not ransack the history of nations, but appeal to one of the ablest judges of men, and himself one of the ablest men that ever lived—the celebrated earl of Chesterfield. In fact, a man who could thoroughly controul his vices, whenever they interfered with his interests, and who could completely put on the appearance of every virtue as often as it suited his purposes, is, on the Stanhopian plan, the *perfect man;* a man to lead nations. But are great abilities, complete without a flaw, and polished without a blemish, the standard of human excellence? This is certainly the staunch opinion of *men of the world;* but I call on honour, virtue, and worth, to give the stygian doctrine a loud negative! However, this must be allowed, that, if you abstract from man the idea of an existence beyond the grave, *then*, the true measure of human conduct is, *proper* and *improper:* virtue and vice, as dispositions of the heart, are, in that case, of scarcely the same import and value to the world at large, as harmony and discord in the modifications of sound; and a delicate sense of honour, like a nice ear for music, though it may sometimes give the possessor an ecstacy unknown to the coarser organs of the herd, yet, considering the harsh gratings, and inharmonic jars, in this ill-tuned state of being, it is odds but the individual would be as happy, and certainly would be as much respected by the true judges of society, as it would then stand, without either a good ear or a good heart.

You must know I have just met with the *Mirror* and *Lounger* for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them; I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I have just read, *Lounger*, No. 61, has cost me more honest tears than any thing I have read for a long time. M'Kenzie has been called the Addison of the Scots, and, in my opinion, Addison would not be hurt at the comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite humour, he as certainly outdoes him in the tender and the pathetic. His *Man of Feeling* (but I am not counsel learned in the laws of criticism) I estimate as the first performance in its kind, I ever saw. From what book, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and benevolence; in short, more of all that ennobles the soul to herself, or endears her to others—than from the simple affecting tale of poor Harley?

Still, with all my admiration of M'Kenzie's writings, I do not know if they are the fittest reading for a young man who is about to set out, as the phrase is, to make his way into life. Do not you think, madam, that among the few favoured of heaven in the structure of their minds (for such there certainly are), there may be a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul, which are of no use, nay, in some degree, absolutely disqualifying, for the truly important business of making a man's way into life? If I am not much mistaken, my gallant young friend, A******, is very much under these disqualifications; and for the young females of a family I could mention, well may they excite parental solicitude, for I, a common acquaintance, or, as my vanity will have it, a humble friend, have often trembled for a turn of mind which may render them eminently happy—or peculiarly miserable!

I have been manufacturing some verses lately; but as I have got the most hurried season of excise business over, I hope to have more leisure to transcribe any thing that may show how much I have the honour to be, madam, yours, &c.

No. XCV.

From Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

My dear Burns, *Edinburgh, 25th May,* 1789.

I am much indebted to you, for your last friendly, elegant epistle, and it shall make a part of the vanity of *my composition*, to retain your correspondence through life. It was remarkable your intro-

ducing the name of Miss Burnet, at a time when she was in such ill health; and I am sure it will grieve your gentle heart, to hear of her being in the last stage of a consumption. Alas! that so much beauty, innocence, and virtue should be nipt in the bud. Hers was the smile of cheerfulness—of sensibility, not of allurement; and her elegance of manners corresponded with the purity and elevation of her mind.

How does your friendly muse? I am sure she still retains her affection for you, and that you have many of her favours in your possession, which I have not seen. I weary much to hear from you.

* * * * * * * * *

I beseech you do not forget me.

* * * * * * * * *

I most sincerely hope all your concerns in life prosper, and that your roof-tree enjoys the blessing of good health. All your friends here are well, among whom, and *not the least*, is your acquaintance Cleghorn. As for myself, I am well, as far as * * * * * * will let a man be; but with these I am happy.

* * * * * * * * *

When you meet with my very agreeable friend, J. Syme, give him for me a hearty squeeze, and bid, God bless him.

Is there any probability of your being soon in Edinburgh?

No. XCVI.

To Dr. MOORE.

Sir, *Dumfries, Excise-office*, 14*th July*, 1790.

Coming into town this morning, to attend my duty in this office, it being collection-day, I met with a gentleman who tells me he is on his way to London; so I take the opportunity of writing to you, as franking is at present under a temporary death. I shall have some snatches of leisure through the day, amid our horrid business and bustle, and I shall improve them as well as I can; but let my letter be as stupid as * * * * * * * * *, as miscellaneous as a news-paper, as short as a hungry grace-before-meat, or as long as a law-paper in the Douglass cause; as ill spelt as country John's billet-doux, or as unsightly a scrawl as Betty Byre-mucker's answer to it; I hope, considering circumstances, you will forgive it; and as it will put you to no expense of postage, I shall have the less reflection about it.

I am sadly ungrateful in not returning you my thanks for your most valuable present, *Zeluco*. In fact, you are in some degree blamable for my neglect. You were pleased to express a wish for my opinion of the work, which so flattered me, that nothing less would serve my over-weening fancy, than a formal criticism on the book. In fact, I have gravely planned a comparative view of you, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollet, in your different qualities and merits as novel-writers. This, I own, betrays my ridiculous vanity, and I may probably never bring the business to bear; for I am fond of the spirit young Elihu shews in the book of Job—"And I said, I will also declare my opinion." I have quite disfigured my copy of the book with my annotations. I never take it up without at the same time taking my pencil, and marking with asterisms, parentheses, &c. wherever I meet with an original thought, a nervous remark on life and manners, a remarkably well-turned period, or a character sketched with uncommon precision.

Though I shall hardly think of fairly writing out my "Comparative view," I shall certainly trouble you with my remarks, such as they are.

I have just received from my gentleman that horrid summons in the book of Revelations—"That time shall be no more!"

The little collection of sonnets have some charming poetry in them. If *indeed* I am indebted to the fair author for the book, and not, as I rather suspect, to a celebrated author of the other sex, I should certainly have written to the lady, with my grateful acknowledgments, and my own ideas of the comparative excellence of her pieces. I would do this last, not from any vanity of thinking that my remarks could be of much consequence to Mrs. Smith, but merely from my own feelings as an author, doing as I would be done by.

No. XCVII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Dear madam, *8th August*, 1790.

After a long day's toil, plague, and care, I sit down to write to you. Ask me not why I have delayed it so long. It was owing to hurry, indolence, and fifty other things; in short to any thing—but forgetfulness of *la plus aimable de son sexe*. By the bye, you are indebted your best courtesy to me for this last compliment; as I pay it from my sincere conviction of its truth—a quality rather rare in compliments of these grinning, bowing, scraping times.

Well, I hope writing to *you* will ease a little my troubled soul. Sorely has it been bruised today! A ci-devant friend of mine, and an intimate acquaintance of yours, has given my feelings a wound that I perceive will gangrene dangerously ere it cure. He has wounded my pride!

* * * * * * * * * *

No. XCVIII.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 8*th August*, 1790.

Forgive me, my once dear, and ever dear friend, my seeming negligence. You cannot sit down and fancy the busy life I lead.

I laid down my goose feather, to beat my brains for an apt simile, and had some thoughts of a com-

try grannum at a family christening; a bride on the market-day before her marriage; * a tavern-keeper at an election-dinner; &c. &c.—but the resemblance that hits my fancy best is, that blackguard miscreant, Satan, who roams about like a roaring lion, seeking, *searching* whom he may devour. However, tossed about as I am, if I choose (and who would not choose) to bind down with the crampets of Attention, the brazen foundation of Integrity, I may rear up the superstructure of Independence, and, from its daring turrets, bid defiance to the storms of fate. And is not this a "consummation devoutly to be wished?"

"Thy spirit, Independence, let me share;
"Lord of the lion-heart, and eagle-eye!
Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky!"

Are not these noble verses? They are the introduction of *Smollet's Ode to Independence.* If you have not seen the poem, I will send it to you.—How wretched is the man that hangs on by the favours of the great! To shrink from every dignity of man, at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who, amid all his tinsel glitter, and stately hauteur, is but a creature formed as thou art—and perhaps not so well formed as thou art—came into the world a puling infant as thou didst, and must go out of it as all men must, a naked corse*.

* * * * * * *

No. XCIX.

From Dr. BLACKLOCK.

Edinburgh, 1st September, 1790.

How does my friend, much I languish to hear,
His fortune, relations, and all that are dear.
With love of the muses so strongly still smitten,
I meant this epistle in verse to have written;
But from age and infirmity, indolence flows,
And this, much I fear, will restore me to prose.
Anon to my business I wish to proceed,
Dr. Anderson guides and provokes me to speed:
A man of integrity, genius, and worth,
Who soon a performance intends to set forth;
A work miscellaneous, extensive, and free,
Which will weekly appear, by the name of the *Bee.*
Of this, from himself, I enclose you a plan,
And hope you will give what assistance you can.
Entangled with business, and haunted with care,
In which, more or less, human nature must share,
Some moments of leisure the muses will claim,
A sacrifice due to amusement and fame.
The Bee, which sucks honey from ev'ry gay bloom,
With some rays of your genius her work may illume,
Whilst the flow'r whence her honey spontaneously flows,
As fragrantly smells, and as vig'rously grows.
Now with kind gratulations 'tis time to conclude,
And add, your promotion is here understood;
Thus free from the servile employ of excise, sir,
We hope soon to hear you commence supervisor;
You then more at leisure, and free from controul,
May indulge the strong passion that reigns in your soul.
But I, feeble I, must to nature give way;
Devoted cold death's, and longevity's prey.
From verses tho' languid, my thoughts must unbend,
Tho' still I remain your affectionate friend,

THO. BLACKLOCK.

* The preceding letter explains the feelings under which this was written. The strain of indignant invective goes on some time longer in the style which our bard was too apt to indulge, and of which the reader has already seen so much. E.

No. C.

Extract of a letter

From Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

Edinburgh, 14th October, 1790.

I lately received a letter from our friend B*** ******.—What a charming fellow lost to society!—born to great expectations—with superior abilities, a pure heart, and untainted morals, his fate in life has been hard indeed—still I am persuaded he is happy; not like the gallant, the gay Lothario, but in the simplicity of rural enjoyment, unmixed with regret at the remembrance of "the days of other years*."

I saw Mr. Dunbar put under the cover of your newspaper, Mr. Wood's poem on Thomson. This poem has suggested an idea to me which you alone are capable to execute:—a song adapted to *each* season of the year. The task is difficult, but the theme is charming: should you succeed, I will undertake to get new music worthy of the subject. What a fine field for your imagination! and who is there alive can draw so many beauties from nature and pastoral imagery as yourself? It is, by the way, surprizing that there does not exist, so far as I know, *a proper song* for each season. We have songs on hunting, fishing, skaiting, and one autumnal song, *Harvest Home.* As your muse is neither spavined nor rusty, you may mount the hill of Parnassus, and return with a sonnet in your pocket for every season. For my suggestions, if I be rude, correct me; if impertinent, chastise me; if presuming, despise me. But if you blend all my weaknesses, and pound out one grain of insincerity, then am I not thy

Faithful friend, &c.

No. CI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

November, 1790.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

* The person here alluded to, is Mr. S. who engaged the editor in this undertaking. See the dedication. E.

Fate has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow which I have received. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle—"Rejoice with them that do rejoice"—for me, *to sing* for joy, is no new thing; but *to preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally jumped for joy.—How could such a mercurial creature as a poet, lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best friend! I seized my gilt-headed Wangee rod, an instrument indispensably necessary in my left hand, in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quick and quicker—out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith, to muse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of prose was impossible. Mrs. Little's is a more elegant, but not a more sincere compliment to the sweet little fellow, than I extempore almost poured out to him, in the following verses. *See the poem On the Birth of a Posthumous Child.*

. . . . . .

I am much flattered by your approbation of my *Tam o' Shanter*, which you express in your former letter; though, by the bye, you load me in that said letter with accusations heavy and many; to all which I plead, *not guilty!* Your book is, I hear, on the road to reach me. As to printing of poetry, when you prepare it for the press, you have only to spell it right, and place the capital letters properly: as to the punctuation, the printers do that themselves.

I have a copy of *Tam o' Shanter* ready to send you by the first opportunity: it is too heavy to send by post.

I heard of Mr. Corbet lately. He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please favour me soon with an account of your good folks; if Mrs. H. is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well.

No. CII.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

Ellisland, 23d January, 1791.

Many happy returns of the season to you, my dear friend! As many of the good things of this life, as is consistent with the usual mixture of good and evil, in the cup of Being!

I have just finished a poem, which you will receive enclosed. It is my first essay in the way of tales.

I have these several months been hammering at an elegy on the amiable and accomplished Miss Burnet. I have got, and can get, no farther than the following fragment, on which, please give me your strictures. In all kinds of poetic composition, I set great store by your opinion; but in sentimental verses, in the poetry of the heart, no Roman catholic ever set more value on the infallibility of the holy father, than I do on yours.

I mean the introductory couplets, as text verses.

. . . . . .

ELEGY

On the late Miss Burnet of Monboddo.

Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize,
As Burnet, lovely from her native skies;
Nor envious death so triumph'd in a blow,
As that which laid th' accomplish'd Burnet low.

Thy form, and mind, sweet maid, can I forget?
In richest ore the brightest jewel set!
In thee, high Heaven above was truest shown,
As by his noblest work, the Godhead best is known.

In vain ye flaunt in summer's pride, ye groves;
Thou crystal streamlet with thy flowery shore,
Ye woodland choir that chaunt your idle loves,
Ye cease to charm; Eliza is no more.

Ye heathy wastes, unmix'd with reedy fens;
Ye mossy streams, with sedge and rushes stor'd;
Ye rugged cliffs o'erhanging dreary glens,
To you I fly, ye with my soul accord.

Princes whose cumb'rous pride was all their worth,
Shall venal lays their pompous exit hail?
And thou, sweet excellence! forsake our earth,
And not a muse in honest grief bewail?

We saw thee shine in youth and beauty's pride,
And virtue's light that beams beyond the spheres;
But, like the sun eclips'd at morning tide,
Thou left'st us darkling in a world of tears.

. . . . . .

Let me hear from you soon. Adieu!

No. CIII.

To Mr. PETER HILL.

17th January, 1791.

Take these two guineas, and place them over against that ****** account of yours! which has gagged my mouth these five or six months! I can as little write good things as apologies to the man I owe money to. O, the supreme curse of making three guineas do the business of five! Not all the labours of Hercules; not all the Hebrews' three centuries of Egyptian bondage, were such an insuperable business, such an ******** task!! Poverty! thou half-sister of death, thou cousin-german of hell! where shall I find force of execration equal to the amplitude of thy demerits? Oppressed by thee, the venerable ancient, grown hoary in the practice of every virtue, laden with years and wretchedness, implores a little—little aid to support his existence, from a stony-hearted son of Mammon, whose sun of prosperity never knew a cloud; and is by him denied and insulted. Oppressed by thee, the man of sentiment, whose heart

glows with independence, and melts with sensibility, inly pines under the neglect, or writhes in bitterness of soul under the contumely, of arrogant, unfeeling wealth. Oppressed by thee, the son of genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remark neglected, and his person despised, while shallow greatness, in his ideot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause. Nor is it only the family of worth that have reason to complain of thee: the children of folly and vice, though, in common with thee, the offspring of evil, smart equally under thy rod. Owing to thee, the man of unfortunate disposition and neglected education, is condemned as a fool for his dissipation, despised and shunned as a needy wretch, when his follies as usual bring him to want; and when his unprincipled necessities drive him to dishonest practices, he is abhorred as a miscreant, and perishes by the justice of his country. But far otherwise is the lot of the man of family and fortune. *His* early follies and extravagance, are spirit and fire; *his* consequent wants, are the embarrassments of an honest fellow; and when, to remedy the matter, he has gained a legal commission to plunder distant provinces, or massacre peaceful nations, he returns, perhaps, laden with the spoils of rapine and murder; lives wicked and respected, and dies a ******* and a lord.—Nay, worst of all, alas for helpless woman! the needy prostitute, who has shivered at the corner of the street, waiting to earn the wages of casual prostitution, is left neglected and insulted, ridden down by the chariot wheels of the coroneted *rip*, hurrying on to the guilty assignation; she, who without the same necessities to plead riots nightly in the same guilty trade.

Well! divines may say of it what they please, but execration is to the mind, what phlebotomy is to the body; the vital sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations.

No. CIV.

From A. F. TYTLER, Esq.

Edinburgh, 12th March, 1791.

Dear sir,

Mr. Hill yesterday put into my hands a sheet of *Grose's Antiquities*, containing a poem of yours, entitled, *Tam o' Shanter*, a tale. The very high pleasure I have received from the perusal of this admirable piece, I feel, demands the warmest acknowledgments. Hill tells me he is to send off a packet for you this day; I cannot resist therefore putting on paper what I must have told you in person, had I met with you after the recent perusal of your tale, which is, that I feel I owe you a debt, which, if undischarged, would reproach me with ingratitude. I have seldom in my life tasted of higher enjoyment from any work of genius, than I have received from this composition; and I am much mistaken, if this poem alone, had you never written another syllable, would not have been sufficient to have transmitted your name down to posterity with high reputation. In the introductory part where you paint the character of your hero, and exhibit him at the alehouse *ingle*, with his tippling cronies, you have delineated nature with a humour and *naiveté*, that would do honour to Matthew Prior; but when you describe the unfortunate orgies of the witches' sabbath, and the hellish scenery in which they are exhibited, you display a power of imagination, that Shakspeare himself could not have exceeded. I know not that I have ever met with a picture of more horrible fancy than the following:

> "Coffins stood round like open presses,
> That shew'd the dead in their last dresses;
> And by some devilish cantrip slight,
> Each in his cauld hand held a light."

But when I came to the succeeding lines, my blood ran cold within me:

> "A knife a father's throat had mangled,
> Whom his ain son of life bereft;
> *The gray hairs yet stuck to the heft.*"

And here, after the two following lines, "Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu'," &c. the descriptive part might perhaps have been better closed, than the four lines which succeed, which, though good in themselves, yet, as they derive all their merit from the satire they contain, are here rather misplaced among the circumstances of pure horror*. The initiation of the young witch is most happily described—the effect of her charms exhibited in the dance on Satan himself—the apostrophe—"Ah, little thought thy reverend graunie!"—the transport of Tam, who forgets his situation, and enters completely into the spirit of the scene, are all features of high merit, in this excellent composition. The only fault it possesses, is, that the winding up, or conclusion of the story, is not commensurate to the interest which is excited by the descriptive and characteristic painting of the preceding parts. —The preparation is fine, but the result is not adequate. But for this perhaps you have a good apology—you stick to the popular tale.

And now that I have got out my mind, and feel a little relieved of the weight of that debt I owed you, let me end this desultory scroll by an advice: —You have proved your talent for a species of composition, in which but a very few of our own poets have succeeded.—Go on—write more tales in the same style—you will eclipse Prior and La Fontaine; for, with equal wit, equal power of numbers, and equal *naiveté* of expression, you have a bolder and more vigorous imagination.

I am, dear sir, with much esteem,
Yours, &c.

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* Our bard profited by Mr. Tytler's criticism, and expunged the four lines accordingly. See *Appendix to Poems.*

No CV.

To A. F. TYTLER, Esq.

Sir,

Nothing less than the unfortunate accident I have met with, could have prevented my grateful acknowledgments for your letter. His own favourite poem, and that an essay in a walk of the muses entirely new to him, where, consequently, his hopes and fears were on the most anxious alarm for his success in the attempt; to have that poem so much applauded by one of the first judges, was the most delicious vibration that ever trilled along the heart-strings of a poor poet. However, Providence, to keep up the proper proportion of evil with the good, which it seems is necessary in this sublunary state, thought proper to check my exultation by a very serious misfortune. A day or two after I received your letter, my horse came down with me and broke my right arm. As this is the first service my arm has done me since its disaster, I find myself unable to do more than just in general terms to thank you for this additional instance of your patronage and friendship. As to the faults you detected in the piece, they are truly there: one of them, the hit at the lawyer and priest, I shall cut out; as to the falling off in the catastrophe, for the reason you justly adduce, it cannot easily be remedied. Your approbation, sir, has given me such additional spirits to persevere in this species of poetic composition, that I am already revolving two or three stories in my fancy. If I can bring these floating ideas to bear any kind of embodied form, it will give me an additional opportunity of assuring you how much I have the honour to be, &c.

No. CVI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 7th February, 1791.

When I tell you, madam, that by a fall, not from my horse, but with my horse, I have been a cripple some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing; you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better, and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease; as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having an idea of composing an elegy on the late miss Burnet, of Monboddo. I had the honour of being pretty well acquainted with her, and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance, as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of God's works was no more. I have, as yet, gone no farther than the following fragment, of which please let me have your opinion. You know that elegy is a subject so much exhausted, that any new idea on the business is not to be expected: 'tis well if we can place an old idea in a new light. How far I have succeeded as to this last, you will judge from what follows—

(*Here follows the elegy, &c. as in page* 201, *adding this verse.*)

The parent's heart that nestled fond in thee,
That heart how sunk, a prey to grief and care:
So decks the woodbine sweet yon aged tree,
So from it ravish'd, leaves it bleak and bare.

* * * * * * * *

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your godson, came safe. This last, madam, is scarcely what my pride can bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of a long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the small-pox and measles over, has cut several teeth, and yet never had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear that the "little floweret" is blooming so fresh and fair, and that the "mother-plant" is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her "cruel wounds" be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear farther from,

Madam, yours, &c.

No. CVII.

To LADY W. M. CONSTABLE,

Acknowledging a present of a valuable snuff-box, with a fine picture of Mary Queen of Scots on the lid.

My lady,

Nothing less than the unlucky accident of having lately broken my right arm, could have prevented me, the moment I received your ladyship's elegant present by Mrs. Miller, from returning you my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments. I assure your ladyship, I shall set it apart: the symbols of religion shall only be more sacred. In the moment of poetic composition, the box shall be my inspiring genius. When I would breathe the comprehensive wish of benevolence for the happiness of others, I shall recollect your ladyship; when I would interest my fancy in the distresses incident to humanity, I shall remember the unfortunate Mary.

No. CVIII.

To Mrs. GRAHAM, of FINTRY.

Madam,

Whether it is that the story of our Mary, queen of Scots, has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet, or whether I have, in the inclosed ballad, succeeded beyond my usual poetic success, I know not; but it has pleased me beyond any effort of my muse for a good while past; on that account

I inclose it particularly to you. It is true, the purity of my motives may be suspected. I am already deeply indebted to Mr. G———'s goodness; and what, *in the usual ways of men*, is of infinitely greater importance, Mr. G. can do me service of the utmost importance in time to come. I was born a poor dog; and, however I may occasionally pick a better bone than I used to do, I know I must live and die poor: but I will indulge the flattering faith that my poetry will considerably outlive my poverty; and without any fustian affectation of spirit, I can promise and affirm, that it must be no ordinary craving of the latter shall ever make me do any thing injurious to the honest fame of the former. Whatever may be my failings, for failings are a part of human nature, may they ever be those of a generous heart, and an independent mind! It is no fault of mine that I was born to dependence; nor is it Mr. G———'s chiefest praise that he can command influence; but it is his merit to bestow, not only with the kindness of a brother, but with the politeness of a gentleman; and I trust it shall be mine, to receive with thankfulness and remember with undiminished gratitude.

No. CIX.

From the REVEREND G. BAIRD.

Sir, *London, 8th February*, 1791.

I trouble you with this letter to inform you that I am in hopes of being able very soon to bring to the press a new edition (long since talked of) of *Michael Bruce's Poems*. The profits of the edition are to go to his mother—a woman of eighty years of age—poor and helpless. The poems are to be published by subscription; and it may be possible, I think, to make out a 2s. 6d. or 3s. volume, with the assistance of a few hitherto unpublished verses, which I have got from the mother of the poet.

But the design I have in view in writing to you, is not merely to inform you of these facts, it is to solicit the aid of your name and pen in support of the scheme. The reputation of Bruce is already high with every reader of classical taste, and I shall be anxious to guard against tarnishing his character, by allowing any new poems to appear that may lower it. For this purpose, the MSS. I am in possession of, have been submitted to the revision of some, whose critical talents I can trust to, and I mean still to submit them to others.

May I beg to know, therefore, if you will take the trouble of perusing the MSS.—of giving your opinion, and suggesting what curtailments, alterations, or amendments, occur to you as advisable? And will you allow us to let it be known, that a few lines by you will be added to the volume?

I know the extent of this request. It is bold to make it. But I have this consolation, that though you see it proper to refuse it, you will not blame me for having made it; you will see my apology in the *motive*.

May I just add, that Michael Bruce is one, in whose company, from his past appearance, you would not, I am convinced, blush to be found; and as I would submit every line of his that should now be published, to your own criticisms, you would be assured that nothing derogatory either to him or you, would be admitted in that appearance he may make in future.

You have already paid an honourable tribute to kindred genius, in Fergusson—I fondly hope that the mother of Bruce will experience your patronage.

I wish to have the subscription papers circulated by the 14th of March, Bruce's birth-day; which I understand some friends in Scotland talk this year of observing—at that time it will be resolved, I imagine, to place a plain, humble stone over his grave. This at least I trust you will agree to do—to furnish, in a few couplets, an *inscription* for it.

On these points may I solicit an answer as early as possible; a short delay might disappoint us in procuring that relief to the mother, which is the object of the whole.

You will be pleased to address for me under cover to the duke of Athole, London.

. . . . . .

P. S. Have you ever seen an engraving published here some time ago from one of your poems, "*O thou pale orb!*" If you have not, I shall have the pleasure of sending it to you.

No. CX.

To the REVEREND G. BAIRD.

In answer to the foregoing.

Why did you, my dear sir, write to me in such a hesitating style, on the business of poor Bruce? Don't I know, and have I not felt, the many ills, the peculiar ills that poetic flesh is heir to? You shall have your choice of all the unpublished poems I have; and had your letter had my direction so as to have reached me sooner (it only came to my hand this moment), I should have directly put you out of suspense on the subject. I only ask, that some prefatory advertisement in the book, as well as in the subscription bills, may bear, that the publication is solely for the benefit of Bruce's mother. I would not put it in the power of ignorance to surmise, or malice to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the work from mercenary motives. Nor need you give me credit for any remarkable generosity in my part of the business. I have such a host of peccadilloes, failings, follies, and backslidings (any body but myself might, perhaps, give some of them a worse appellation) that by way of some balance, however trifling, in the account, I am fain to do any good that occurs in my very limited power to a fellow creature, just for the selfish purpose of clearing a little the vista of retrospection.

* * * * * * *

No. CXI.

To Dr. MOORE.

Ellisland, 28th February, 1791.

I do not know, sir, whether you are a subscriber to *Grose's Antiquities of Scotland*. If you are, the inclosed poem will not be altogether new to you. Captain Grose did me the favour to send me a dozen copies of the proof-sheet, of which this is one. Should you have read the piece before, still this will answer the principal end I have in view: it will give me another opportunity of thanking you for all your goodness to the rustic bard; and also of shewing you, that the abilities you have been pleased to commend and patronize are still employed in the way you wish.

The *Elegy on captain Henderson*, is a tribute to the memory of a man I loved much. Poets have in this the same advantage as Roman catholics; they can be of service to their friends after they have past that bourne where all other kindness ceases to be of any avail. Whether, after all, either the one or the other be of any real service to the dead, is, I fear, very problematical; but I am sure they are highly gratifying to the living: and as a very orthodox text, I forgot where in scripture, says, "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin;" so say I, whatsoever is not detrimental to society, and is of positive enjoyment, is of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by his creatures with thankful delight. As almost all my religious tenets originate from my heart, I am wonderfully pleased with the idea, that I can still keep up a tender intercourse with the dearly beloved friend, or still more dearly beloved mistress, who is gone to the world of spirits.

The ballad on queen Mary was begun while I was busy with *Percy's Reliques of English Poetry*. By the way, how much is every honest heart, which has a tincture of Caledonian prejudice, obliged to you for your glorious story of Buchanan and Targe! 'Twas an unequivocal proof of your loyal gallantry of soul, giving Targe the victory. I should have been mortified to the ground if you had not.

* * * * * * * * * *

I have just read over, once more of many times, your *Zeluco*. I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one or two, I think, which, with humble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and send them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart, is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson, indeed, might perhaps be excepted; but, unhappily, his *dramatis personæ* are beings of some other world; and, however they may captivate the unexperienced, romantic fancy of a boy or a girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper minds.

As to my private concerns, I am going on, a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the list of excise as a supervisor. I am not yet employed as such, but in a few years I shall fall into the file of supervisorship by seniority. I have had an immense loss in the death of the earl of Glencairn; the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise. Independent of my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence; so soon as the prince's friends had got in (and every dog you know has his day) my getting forward in the excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be. Though this was a consummation devoutly to be wished, yet, thank heaven, I can live and rhyme as I am; and as to my boys, poor little fellows! if I cannot place them on as high an elevation in life as I could wish, I shall, if I am favoured so much of the Disposer of events as to see that period, fix them on as broad and independent a basis as possible. Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish ancestors, this is one of the best, *better be the head o' the commonalty, as the tail o' the gentry*.

But I am got on a subject, which, however interesting to me, is of no manner of consequence to you; so I shall give you a short poem on the other page, and close this with assuring you how sincerely I have the honour to be, yours, &c.

* * * * * * * * * *

Written on the blank leaf of a book, which I presented to a very young lady, whom I had formerly characterised under the denomination of *The Rose-bud*. *(See Poems.)*

No. CXII.

From Dr. MOORE.

Dear sir, *London, 29th March*, 1791.

Your letter of the 28th of February I received only two days ago, and this day I had the pleasure of waiting on the reverend Mr. Baird, at the duke of Athole's, who had been so obliging as to transmit it to me, with the printed verses on *Alloa Church*, the *Elegy on captain Henderson*, and the *Epitaph*. There are many poetical beauties in the former: what I particularly admire are the three striking similes from

"Or like the snow falls in the river,"

and the eight lines which begin with

"By this time he was cross the ford*,"

so exquisitely expressive of the superstitious impressions of the country. And the twenty-two lines from

* See *Poems*.

" Coffins stood round like open presses,"

which, in my opinion, are equal to the ingredients of Shakspeare's cauldron in *Macbeth*.

As for the *Elegy*, the chief merit of it consists in the very graphical description of the objects belonging to the country in which the poet writes, and which none but a Scottish poet could have described, and none but a real poet, and a close observer of nature, could have *so* described.

* * * * * *

There is something original and to me wonderfully pleasing in the *Epitaph*.

I remember you once hinted before, what you repeat in your last, that you had made some remarks on *Zeluco*, on the margin. I should be very glad to see them, and regret you did not send them before the last edition, which is just published. Pray transcribe them for me; I sincerely value your opinion very highly, and pray do not suppress one of those in which you *censure* the sentiment or expression. Trust me it will break no squares between us—I am not akin to the bishop of Grenada.

I must now mention what has been on my mind for some time; I cannot help thinking you imprudent, in scattering abroad so many copies of your verses. It is most natural to give a few to confidential friends, particularly to those who are connected with the subject, or who are perhaps themselves the subject, but this ought to be done under promise not to give other copies. Of the poem you sent me on queen Mary, I refused every solicitation for copies, but I lately saw it in a newspaper. My motive for cautioning you on this subject, is, that I wish to engage you to collect all your fugitive pieces, not already printed, and after they have been re-considered, and polished to the utmost of your power, I would have you publish them by another subscription: in promoting of which I will exert myself with pleasure.

In your future compositions, I wish you would use the modern English. You have shewn your powers in Scottish sufficiently. Although in certain subjects it gives additional zest to the humour, yet it is lost to the English; and why should you write only for a part of the island, when you can command the admiration of the whole?

If you chance to write to my friend Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop, I beg to be affectionately remembered to her. She must not judge of the warmth of my sentiments respecting her, by the number of my letters; I hardly ever write a line but on business; and I do not know that I should have scribbled all this to you, but for the business part, that is, to instigate you to a new publication; and to tell you, that when you think you have a sufficient number to make a volume, you should set your friends on getting subscriptions. I wish I could have a few hours conversation with you—I have many things to say, which I cannot write. If I ever go to Scotland, I will let you know, that you may meet me at your own house, or my friend Mrs. Hamilton's, or both.

Adieu, my dear sir, &c.

No. CXIII.

To the REV. ARCH. ALISON.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, 14th February, 1791.

Sir,

You must, by this time, have set me down as one of the most ungrateful of men. You did me the honour to present me with a book which does honour to science and the intellectual powers of man, and I have not even so much as acknowledged the receipt of it. The fact is, you yourself are to blame for it. Flattered as I was by your telling me that you wished to have my opinion of the work, the old spiritual enemy of mankind, who knows well that vanity is one of the sins that most easily beset me, put it into my head to ponder over the performance with the look-out of a critic, and to draw up forsooth a deep learned digest of strictures, on a composition, of which, in fact, until I read the book, I did not even know the first principles. I own, sir, that, at first glance, several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangour of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime, than the twingle twangle of a jews-harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twig, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all association of ideas; —these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith. In short, sir, except *Euclid's Elements of Geometry*, which I made a shift to unravel by my father's fire-side, in the winter evening of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information, and added so much to my stock of ideas, as your "*Essays on the Principles of Taste*." One thing, sir, you must forgive my mentioning as an uncommon merit in the work, I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style, sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible.

I inclose you some poetic bagatelles of my late composition. The one in print is my first essay in the way of telling a tale.

I am, sir, &c.

No. CXIV.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

12th March, 1791.

If the foregoing piece be worth your strictures let me have them. For my own part, a thing that I have just composed, always appears through a double portion of that partial medium in which an author will ever view his own works. I believe, in general, novelty has something in it that inebri-

ates the fancy, and not unfrequently dissipates and fumes away like other intoxication, and leaves the poor patient, as usual, with an aching heart. A striking instance of this might be adduced, in the revolution of many a hymeneal honeymoon. But lest I sink into stupid prose, and so sacrilegiously intrude on the office of my parish priest, I shall fill up the page in my own way, and give you another song of my late composition, which will appear perhaps in Johnston's work, as well as the former.

You must know a beautiful Jacobite air, *There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame.* When political combustion ceases to be the object of princes and patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of historians and poets.

. . . . . .

By yon castle wa' at the close of the day,
I heard a man sing, though his head it was grey;
And as he was singing, the tears fast down came—
There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame.

The church is in ruins, the state is in jars,
Delusions, oppressions, and murderous wars:
We dare na' weel say't, but we ken wha's to blame—
There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame.

My seven braw sons for Jamie drew sword,
And now I greet round their green beds in the yerd:
It brak the sweet heart o' my faithfu' auld dame—
There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame.

Now life is a burden that bows me down,
Sin' I tint my bairns, and he tint his crown;
But 'till my last moment my words are the same,
There'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame.

. . . . . .

If you like the air, and if the stanzas hit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you would oblige me, if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you would give my honest effusion to "the memory of joys that are past," to the few friends whom you indulge in that pleasure. But I have scribbled on till I hear the clock has intimated the near approach of

"That hour o' night's black arch the key-stane."—

So good night to you! Sound be your sleep, and delectable your dreams! Apropos, how do you like this thought in a ballad, I have just now on the tapis?

I look to the west, when I gae to rest,
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be;
For far in the west, is he I lo'e best,
The lad that is dear to my babie and me!

. . . . . .

Good night, once more, and God bless you.

No. CXV.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 11th April, 1791.

I am once more able, my honoured friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster, that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered—joy and sorrow—for on Saturday morning last, Mrs. Burns made me a present of a fine boy; rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed I look on your little namesake to be my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on *Tam o' Shanter* to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery, that might, perhaps, be as well spared; but then they also shew, in my opinion, a force of genius, and a finishing polish, that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs. Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to day at breakfast, as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale, sprightly damsels, that are bred among the *hay and heather*. We cannot hope for that highly polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is indeed such an inestimable treasure, that, where it can be had in its native heavenly purity, unstained by some one or other of the many shades of affectation, and unallayed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to heaven, I should think it cheaply purchased at the expence of every other earthly good! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such an humble one as mine; we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence—as fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity; nature's mother-wit, and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unsuspicious of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return; these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made. Do, let me hear, by first post, how *cher petit monsieur* comes on with his small-pox. May almighty goodness preserve and restore him!

No. CXVI.

To ——————

Dear sir,

I am exceedingly to blame in not writing you long ago; but the truth is, that I am the most in

dolent of all human beings; and when I matriculate in the herald's office, I intend that my supporters shall be two sloths, my crest a slow-worm, and the motto "Deil tak the foremost." So much by way of apology for not thanking you sooner for your kind execution of my commission.

I would have sent you the poem; but somehow or other it found its way into the public papers, where you must have seen it.

* * * * * * * *

I am ever, dear sir, yours sincerely,
ROBERT BURNS.

No. CXVII.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

11th June, 1791.

Let me interest you, my dear Cunningham, in behalf of the gentleman who waits on you with this. He is a Mr. Clarke, of Moffat, principal schoolmaster there, and is at present suffering severely under the * * * * * * of one or two powerful individuals of his employers. He is accused of harshness to * * * * that were placed under his care. God help the teacher, if a man of sensibility and genius, and such is my friend Clarke, when a booby father presents him with his booby son, and insists on lighting up the rays of science, in a fellow's head whose skull is impervious and inaccessible by any other way than a positive fracture with a cudgel: a fellow whom in fact it savours of impiety to attempt making a scholar of, as he has been marked a blockhead in the book of fate, at the almighty fiat of his Creator.

The patrons of Moffat school are, the ministers, magistrates, and town-council of Edinburgh, and as the business comes now before them, let me beg my dearest friend to do every thing in his power to serve the interests of a man of genius and worth, and a man whom I particularly respect and esteem. You know some good fellows among the magistracy and council, * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * but particularly you have much to say with a reverend gentleman, to whom you have the honour of being very nearly related, and whom this country and age have had the honour to produce. I need not name the historian of Charles V.* I tell him through the medium of his nephew's influence, that Mr. Clarke is a gentleman who will not disgrace even his patronage. I know the merits of the cause thoroughly, and say it that my friend is falling a sacrifice to prejudiced ignorance, and * * * * * * *. God help the children of dependence! Hated and persecuted by their enemies, and too often, alas! almost unexceptionably received by their friends with disrespect and reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice. O to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the pride of his independence, amid the solitary wilds of his desarts, rather than in civilized life, helplessly to tremble for a subsistence, precarious as the caprice of a fellow-creature! Every man has his virtues, and no man is without his failings; and curse on that privileged plain dealing of friendship, which, in the hour of my calamity, cannot reach forth the helping hand, without at the same time pointing out those failings, and apportioning them their share in procuring my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls ye, and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by my virtues if you please, but do, also, spare my follies: the first will witness in my breast for themselves, and the last will give pain enough to the ingenuous mind without you. And, since deviating more or less from the paths of propriety and rectitude, must be incident to human nature, do thou, fortune, put it in my power, always from myself, and of myself, to bear the consequences of those errors. I do not want to be independent that I may sin, but I want to be independent in my sinning.

To return in this rambling letter to the subject I set out with, let me recommend my friend, Mr. Clarke, to your acquaintance and good offices; his worth entitles him to the one, and his gratitude will merit the other. I long much to hear from you. Adieu!

* Dr. Robertson was uncle to Mr. Cunningham. E.

No. CXVIII.

From THE EARL of BUCHAN.

Dryburgh Abbey, 17*th June*, 1791.

Lord Buchan has the pleasure to invite Mr. Burns to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson, on Ednam Hill, on the 22d of September; for which day perhaps his muse may inspire an ode suited to the occasion. Suppose Mr. Burns should, leaving the Nith, go across the country, and meet the Tweed at the nearest point from his farm—and, wandering along the pastoral banks of Thomson's pure parent stream, catch inspiration on the devious walk, till he finds lord Buchan sitting on the ruins of Dryburgh. There the commendator will give him a hearty welcome, and try to light his lamp at the pure flame of native genius, upon the altar of Caledonian virtue. This poetical perambulation of the Tweed, is a thought of the late sir Gilbert Elliot's, and of lord Minto's, followed out by his accomplished grandson, the present sir Gilbert, who having been with lord Buchan lately, the project was renewed, and will, they hope, be executed in the manner proposed.

No. CXIX.

To THE EARL of BUCHAN.

My lord,

Language sinks under the ardour of my feelings when I would thank your lordship for the honour you have done me in inviting me to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson. In my first enthusiasm in reading the card you did me the honour to write me, I overlooked every obstacle, and determined to go; but I fear it will not be in my power. A week or two's absence, in

the very middle of my harvest, is what I much doubt I dare not venture on.

Your lordship hints at an ode for the occasion: but who would write after Collins? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson, and despaired.—I got indeed to the length of three or four stanzas, in the way of address to the shade of the bard, on crowning his bust. I shall trouble your lordship with the subjoined copy of them, which, I am afraid, will be but too convincing a proof, how unequal I am to the task. However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your lordship, and declaring how sincerely and gratefully I have the honour to be, &c.

* * * * * *

No. CXX.

From THE SAME.

Sir, *Dryburgh Abbey, 16th Sept.* 1791.

Your address to the shade of Thomson has been well received by the public; and though I should disapprove of your allowing Pegasus to ride with you off the field of your honourable and useful profession, yet I cannot resist an impulse which I feel at this moment, to suggest to your muse *Harvest Home*, as an excellent subject for her grateful song, in which the peculiar aspect and manners of our country, might furnish an excellent portrait and landscape of Scotland, for the employment of happy moments of leisure and recess, from your more important occupations.

Your *Halloween*, and *Saturday Night*, will remain to distant posterity as interesting pictures of rural innocence and happiness in your native country, and were happily written in the dialect of the people; but *Harvest Home* being suited to descriptive poetry, except where colloquial, may escape the disguise of a dialect which admits of no elegance or dignity of expression. Without the assistance of any god or goddess, and without the invocation of any foreign muse, you may convey, in epistolary form, the description of a scene so gladdening and picturesque, with all the concomitant local position, landscape, and costume, contrasting the peace, improvement, and happiness of the borders of the once hostile nations of Britain, with their former oppression and misery, and showing, in lively and beautiful colours, the beauties and joys of a rural life. And as the unvitiated heart is naturally disposed to overflow in gratitude in the moment of prosperity, such a subject would furnish you with an amiable opportunity of perpetuating the names of Glencairn, Miller, and your other eminent benefactors; which, from what I know of your spirit, and have seen of your poems and letters, will not deviate from the chastity of praise, that is so uniformly united to true taste and genius.

I am, sir, &c.

No. CXXI.

To LADY E. CUNNINGHAM.

My lady,

I would, as usual, have availed myself of the privilege your goodness has allowed me, of sending you any thing I compose in my poetical way; but as I had resolved, so soon as the shock of my irreparable loss would allow me, to pay a tribute to my late benefactor, I determined to make that the first piece I should do myself the honour of sending you. Had the wing of my fancy been equal to the ardour of my heart, the inclosed had been much more worthy your perusal: as it is, I beg leave to lay it at your ladyship's feet. As all the world knows my obligations to the late earl of Glencairn, I would wish to shew as openly that my heart glows, and shall ever glow, with the most grateful sense and remembrance of his lordship's goodness. The sables I did myself the honour to wear to his lordship's memory, were not the "mockery of woe." Nor shall my gratitude perish with me!—If, among my children, I shall have a son that has a heart, he shall hand it down to his child as a family honour, and a family debt, that my dearest existence I owe to the noble house of Glencairn!

I was about to say, my lady, that if you think the poem may venture to see the light, I would, in some way or other, give it to the world*.

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No. CXXII.

To Mr. AINSLIE.

My dear Ainslie,

Can you minister to a mind diseased? can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, head-ache, nausea, and all the rest of the d——d hounds of hell, that beset a poor wretch, who has been guilty of the sin of drunkenness—can you speak peace to a troubled soul?

Miserable perdu that I am, I have tried every thing that used to amuse me, but in vain: here must I sit, a monument of the vengeance laid up in store for the wicked, slowly counting every chick of the clock, as it slowly—slowly, numbers over these lazy scoundrels of hours, who, d—n them, are ranked up before me, every one at his neighbour's backside, and every one with a burthen of anguish on his back, to pour on my devoted head—and there is none to pity me. My wife scolds me! my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow.—When I tell you even * * * has lost its power to please, you will guess something of my hell within, and all around me—I began *Elibanks and Elibraes*, but the stanzas fell unenjoyed and unfinished from my listless tongue: at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours, that lay by me in my book case, and I felt something, for the first time since I opened my eyes, of pleasurable existence.——Well—I begin to breathe a little, since I began to write to you. How are you, and what are you doing? How goes Law? Apropos, for connexion's sake do not address to me supervisor, for that is an honour I

* The poem enclosed, is *The Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn.*

cannot pretend to—I am on the list, as we call it, for a supervisor, and will be called out by and bye to act as one; but at present, I am a simple gauger, tho' t'other day I got an appointment to an excise division of 25*l. per ann.* better than the rest. My present income, down money, is 70*l. per ann.*

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I have one or two good fellows here, whom you would be glad to know.

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No. CXXIII.

From Sir JOHN WHITEFOORD.

Sir, *Near Maybole, 16th October*, 1791.

Accept my thanks for your favour, with the *Lament* on the death of my much esteemed friend, and your worthy patron, the perusal of which pleased and affected me much. The lines addressed to me are very flattering.

I have always thought it most natural to suppose (and a strong argument in favour of a future existence), that when we see an honourable and virtuous man, labouring under bodily infirmities, and oppressed by the frowns of fortune in this world, that there was a happier state beyond the grave; where that worth and honour which were neglected here, would meet with their just reward, and where temporal misfortunes would receive an eternal recompense. Let us cherish this hope for our departed friend; and moderate our grief for that loss we have sustained: knowing that he cannot return to us, but we may go to him.

Remember me to your wife, and, with every good wish for the prosperity of you and your family, believe me at all times,

Your most sincere friend,
JOHN WHITEFOORD.

No. CXXIV.

From A. F. TYTLER, Esq.

Dear sir, *Edinburgh, 27th November*, 1791.

You have much reason to blame me for neglecting till now to acknowledge the receipt of a most agreeable packet, containing *The Whistle*, a ballad: and *The Lament*; which reached me about six weeks ago in London, from whence I am just returned. Your letter was forwarded to me there from Edinburgh, where, as I observed by the date, it had lain for some days. This was an additional reason for me to have answered it immediately on receiving it; but the truth was, the bustle of business, engagements, and confusion of one kind or another, in which I found myself immersed all the time I was in London, absolutely put it out of my power. But to have done with apologies, let me now endeavour to prove myself in some degree deserving of the very flattering compliment you pay me, by giving you at least, a frank and candid, if it should not be a judicious criticism, on the poems you sent me.

The ballad of *The Whistle*, is, in my opinion, truly excellent. The old tradition which you have taken up, is the best adapted for a Bacchanalian composition of any I have ever met with, and you have done it full justice. In the first place, the strokes of wit arise naturally from the subject, and are uncommonly happy. For example,

"The bands grew the tighter the more they were wet."

"Cynthia hinted she'd find them next morn."

"Tho' fate said a hero should perish in light,
So up rose bright Phœbus, and down fell the knight."

In the next place, you are singularly happy in the discrimination of your heroes, and in giving each the sentiments and language suitable to his character. And lastly, you have much merit in the delicacy of the panegyric which you have contrived to throw on each of the *dramatis personæ*, perfectly appropriate to his character. The compliment to sir Robert, the blunt soldier, is peculiarly fine. In short, this composition, in my opinion, does you great honour, and I see not a line or a word in it, which I could wish to be altered.

As to *The Lament*, I suspect, from some expressions in your letter to me, that you are more doubtful with respect to the merits of this piece, than of the other, and I own I think you have reason; for although it contains some beautiful stanzas, as the first, "The wind blew hollow," &c. the fifth, "Ye scatter'd birds;" the thirteenth, "Awake thy last sad voice," &c. yet it appears to me faulty as a whole, and inferior to several of those you have already published in the same strain. My principal objection lies against the plan of the piece. I think it was unnecessary and improper to put the lamentation in the mouth of a fictitious character an *aged bard*.—It had been much better to have lamented your patron in your own person, to have expressed your genuine feelings for his loss, and to have spoken the language of nature, rather than that of fiction, on the subject. Compare this with your poem of the same title in your printed volume which begins, *O thou pale orb!* and observe what it is that forms the charm of that composition. It is, that it speaks the language of *truth* and of *nature*. The change is, in my opinion, injudicious too in this respect, that an *aged* bard has much less need of a patron and protector, than a *young* one. I have thus given you, with much freedom, my opinion of both the pieces. I should have made a very ill return to the compliment you paid me, if I had given you any other than my genuine sentiments.

It will give me great pleasure to hear from you when you find leisure, and I beg you will believe me ever, dear sir, yours, &c.

No. CXXV.

To Miss DAVIES.

It is impossible, madam, that the generous warmth and angelic purity of your youthful mind

can have any idea of that moral disease, under which I unhappily must rank as the chief of sinners; I mean a torpitude of the moral powers, that may be called, a lethargy of conscience.—In vain Remorse rears her horrent crest, and rouses all her snakes: beneath the deadly-fixed eye and leaden hand of Indolence, their wildest ire is charmed into the torpor of the bat, slumbering out the rigours of winter, in the chink of a ruined wall. Nothing less, madam, could have made me so long neglect your obliging commands. Indeed I had one apology—the bagatelle was not worth presenting. Besides, so strongly am I interested in miss D——'s fate and welfare in the serious business of life, amid its chances and changes, that to make her the subject of a silly ballad, is downright mockery of these ardent feelings; it is like an impertinent jest to a dying friend.

Gracious Heaven! why this disparity between our wishes and our powers? Why is the most generous wish to make others blest, impotent and ineffectual—as the idle breeze that crosses the pathless desart? In my walks of life, I have met with a few people to whom how gladly would I have said—"Go, be happy! I know that your hearts have been wounded by the scorn of the proud, whom accident has placed above you—or worse still, in whose hands are, perhaps, placed many of the comforts of your life. But there! ascend that rock, Independence, and look justly down on their littleness of soul. Make the worthless tremble under your indignation, and the foolish sink before your contempt; and largely impart that happiness to others, which, I am certain, will give yourselves so much pleasure to bestow!"

Why, dear madam, must I wake from this delightful reverie, and find it all a dream? Why, amid my generous enthusiasm, must I find myself poor and powerless, incapable of wiping one tear from the eye of pity, or of adding one comfort to the friend I love?—Out upon the world! say I, that its affairs are administered so ill! They talk of reform;—good Heaven! what a reform would I make among the sons, and even the daughters of men!—Down, immediately, should go fools from the high places where misbegotten chance has perked them up, and through life should they skulk, ever haunted by their native insignificance, as the body marches accompanied by its shadow. —As for a much more formidable class, the knaves, I am at a loss what to do with them: had I a world, there should not be a knave in it.

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But the hand that could give, I would liberally fill; and I would pour delight on the heart that could kindly forgive, and generously love.

Still the inequalities of life are, among men, comparatively tolerable—but there is a delicacy, a tenderness, accompanying every view in which we can place lovely woman, that are grated and shocked at the rude, capricious distinctions of fortune. Woman is the blood-royal of life: let there be slight degrees of precedency among them—but let them be *all* sacred.—Whether this last sentiment be right or wrong, I am not accountable; it is an original component feature of my mind.

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No. CXXVI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 17th December, 1791.

Many thanks, to you, madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother-plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard, and will be answered up to the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent; and then Mrs. Henri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in every thing but his abridged existence.

I have just finished the following song, which, to a lady the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his truly illustrious line, and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology.

. . . . . .

Scene—A field of battle—time of the day, evening—the wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following

SONG OF DEATH.

Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies,
Now gay with the broad setting sun;
Farewell, loves and friendships! ye dear, tender ties,
Our race of existence is run!

Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go, frighten the coward and slave;
Go, teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know,
No terrors hast thou to the brave!

Thou strik'st the poor peasant—he sinks in the dark,
Nor saves e'en the wreck of a name:
Thou strik'st the young hero—a glorious mark!
He falls in the blaze of his fame!

In the field of proud honour—our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save—
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands—
O, who would not die with the brave!

. . . . . .

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was, looking over with a musical friend, M'Donald's collection of highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled *Oran an Aoig*, or *The Song of Death*, to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces, which, ere you full-orbed moon, whose broad impudent

face now stares at old mother earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to transcribe for you. *A dieu je vous commende!*

No. CXXVII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

5th January, 1792.

You see my hurried life, madam: I can only command starts of time; however I am glad of one thing; since I finished the other sheet, the political blast that threatened my welfare is overblown. I have corresponded with commissioner Graham, for the board had made me the subject of their animadversions; and now I have the pleasure of informing you, that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now as to these informers, may the devil be let loose to —— but hold! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall a swearing in this.

Alas! how little do the wantonly or idly officious, think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence, or thoughtless blabbings! What a difference there is, in intrinsic worth, candour, benevolence, generosity, kindness—in all the charities and all the virtues, between one class of human beings and another! For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with, in the hospitable hall of D——, their generous hearts—their uncontaminated, dignified minds—their informed and polished understandings—what a contrast, when compared—if such comparing were not downright sacrilege—with the soul of the misereant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him, and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife, and prattling innocents, turned over to beggary and ruin!

Your cup, my dear madam, arrived safe. I had two worthy fellows dining with me the other day, when I, with great formality, produced my whigmeleerie cup, and told them that it had been a family-piece among the descendants of sir William Wallace. This roused such an enthusiasm, that they insisted on bumpering the punch round in it; and by and by, never did your great ancestor lay a *Southron* more completely to rest, than for a time did your cup my two friends. Apropos, this is the season of wishing. May God bless you, my dear friend, and bless me, the humblest and sincerest of your friends, by granting you yet many returns of the season! May all good things attend you and yours, wherever they are scattered over the earth!

No. CXXVIII.

To Mr. WILLIAM SMELLIE, *Printer*.

Dumfries, 22*d January*, 1792.

I sit down, my dear sir, to introduce a young lady to you, and a lady in the first ranks of fashion too. What a task! to you—who care no more for the herd of animals called young ladies, than you do for the herd of animals called young gentlemen. To you—who despise and detest the groupings and combinations of fashion, as an idiot painter that seems industrious to place staring fools and unprincipled knaves in the foreground of his picture, while men of sense and honesty are too often thrown in the dimmest shades. Mrs. Riddel, who will take this letter to town with her, and send it to you, is a character that, even in your own way, as a naturalist and a philosopher, would be an acquisition to your acquaintance. The lady too is a votary of the muses; and as I think myself somewhat of a judge in my own trade, I assure you that her verses, always correct, and often elegant, are much beyond the common run of the *lady-poetesses* of the day. She is a great admirer of your book, and hearing me say that I was acquainted with you, she begged to be known to you, as she is just going to pay her first visit to our Caledonian capital. I told her that her best way was, to desire her near relation, and your intimate friend, Craigdarroch, to have you at his house while she was there; and lest you might think of a lively West Indian girl of eighteen, as girls of eighteen too often deserve to be thought of, I should take care to remove that prejudice. To be impartial, however, in appreciating the lady's merits, she has one unlucky failing; a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it; and a failing that you will as easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself:—where she dislikes or despises, she is apt to make no more a secret of it, than where she esteems and respects.

I will not present you with the unmeaning *compliments of the season*, but I will send you my warmest wishes and most ardent prayers, that *fortune* may never throw your *subsistence* to the mercy of a *knave*, or set your *character* on the judgment of a *fool*; but that, upright, and erect, you may walk to an honest grave, where men of letters shall say, here lies a man who did honour to science, and men of worth shall say, here lies a man who did honour to human nature.

No. CXXIX.

To Mr. W. NICOL.

20th February, 1792.

O thou, wisest among the wise, meridian blaze of prudence, full moon of discretion, and chief of many counsellors! How infinitely is thy puddle-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wreteh, of whom the zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units, up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven, and bright as the meteor of inspiration, may it be my portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favour of that

father of proverbs and master of maxims, that antipode of folly, and magnet among the sages, the wise and witty Willie Nicol! Amen! Amen! Yea, so be it!

For me! I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon, to the cloudless glory of a summer sun! Sorely sighing in bitterness of soul, I say, when shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills*? As for him, his works are perfect: never did the pen of calumny blur the fair page of his reputation, nor the bolt of hatred fly at his dwelling.

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Thou mirror of purity, when shall the effine lamp of my glimmerous understanding, purged from sensual appetites and gross desires, shine like the constellation of thy intellectual powers?—As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and thy lips are holy. Never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness, and the pleasures of darkness, pollute the sacred flame of thy sky-descended and heaven-bound desires: never did the vapours of impurity stain the unclouded serene of thy cerulean imagination. O that like thine, were the tenor of my life, like thine, the tenor of my conversation! then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness! Then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid.—May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for, O thou lamp of wisdom and mirror of morality! thy devoted slave†.

No. CXXX.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

3d March, 1792.

Since I wrote to you the last lugubrious sheet, I have not had time to write you farther. When I say that I had not time, that, as usual, means, that the three demons, indolence, business, and ennui, have so completely shared my hours among them, as not to leave me a five minutes fragment to take up a pen in.

Thank heaven, I feel my spirits buoying upwards with the renovating year. Now I shall in good earnest take up Thomson's songs. I dare say he thinks I have used him unkindly, and I must own with too much appearance of truth. Apropos, do you know the much admired old highland air called *The Sutor's Dochter?* It is a first-rate favourite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it to you as it was sung with great applause in some fashionable circles by major Robertson, of Lude, who was here with his corps.

* * * * * * * * *

There is one commission that I must trouble you with. I lately lost a valuable seal, a present from a departed friend, which vexes me much. I have gotten one of your highland pebbles, which I fancy would make a very decent one; and I want to cut my armorial bearing on it; will you be so obliging as inquire what will be the expense of such a business? I do not know that my name is matriculated, as the heralds call it, at all; but I have invented arms for myself, so you know I shall be chief of the name; and by courtesy of Scotland, will likewise be entitled to supporters. These, however, I do not intend having on my seal. I am a bit of a herald; and shall give you, *secundum artem*, my arms. On a field, azure, a holly bush, seeded, proper, in base; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. On a wreath of the colours, a wood-lark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for crest. Two mottoes; round the top of the crest, *Wood notes wild;* at the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, *Better a wee bush than nae bield.* By the shepherd's pipe and crook I do not mean the nonsense of painters of Arcadia; but a *stock and horn*, and a *club*, such as you see at the head of Allan Ramsay, in Allan's quarto edition of the *Gentle Shepherd.* By the bye, do you know Allan? He must be a man of very great genius.—Why is he not more known?—Has he no patrons? or do "Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain beat keen and heavy" on him? I once, and but once, got a glance of that noble edition of the noblest pastoral in the world, and, dear as it was, I mean, dear as to my pocket, I would have bought it; but I was told that it was printed and engraved for subscribers only. He is the *only* artist who has hit *genuine* pastoral *costume.* What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow and harden the heart so? I think that were I as rich as the sun, I should be as generous as the day; but as I have no reason to imagine my soul a nobler one than any other man's, I must conclude that wealth imparts a bird-lime quality to the possessor, at which the man, in his native poverty, would have revolted. What has led me to this, is the idea of such merit as Mr. Allan possesses, and such riches as a nabob or governor contractor possesses, and why they do not form a mutual league. Let wealth shelter and cherish unprotected merit, and the gratitude and celebrity of that merit will richly repay it.

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No. CXXXI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Annan Water Foot, 22d August, 1792.

Do not blame me for it, madam—my own conscience, hackneied and weather-beaten as it is, in watching and reproving my vagaries, follies, indo-

* Mr. Nicol.

† This strain of irony was excited by a letter of Mr. Nicol, containing good advice. E.

lence, &c. has continued to blame and punish me sufficiently.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Do you think it possible, my dear and honoured friend, that I could be so lost to gratitude for many favours; to esteem for much worth, and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of, now, old acquaintance, and I hope and am sure of progressive increasing friendship—as, for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much loved friend and her wide-scattered connexions, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they possibly can?

Apropos (though how it is apropos, I have not leisure to explain), do you know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours?—Almost! said I—I am in love, souse! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word, Love, owing to the *interminglédoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon, and listening to a messenger of Heaven, appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home, among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy, and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting, and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss L— B—, your neighbour, at M——. Mr. B. with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H. of G. passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honour of calling on me; on which I took my horse (though God knows I could ill spare the time), and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with

"My bonnie Lizie Bailie,
I'll rowe thee in my plaidie," &c.

So I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, "unanointed, unanealed," as Hamlet says.—*See p.* 94.

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people who would be the happier the oftener they met together, are, almost without exception, always so placed as never to meet but once or twice a year, which, considering the few years of a man's life, is a very great "evil under the sun," which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition, that "we meet to part no more."

* * * * * *

"Tell us, ye dead,
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?"

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. "O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!" but it cannot be; you and I, my friend, must make the experiment by ourselves, and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary by making us better men, but also by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that your little godson, and every little creature that shall call me father, shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labour of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua.

No. CXXXII.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

Dumfries, 10th September, 1792.

No! I will not attempt an apology.—Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the excise; making ballads, and then drinking and singing them; and, over and above all, the correcting the press-work of two different publications; still, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my friends and fellow-creatures. I might have done, as I do at present, snatched an hour near "witching time of night,"—and scrawled a page or two. I might have congratulated my friend on his marriage; or I might have thanked the Caledonian archers for the honour they have done me (though, to do myself justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done both, long ere now). Well then, here is to your good health! for you must know, I have set a nipperkin of toddy by me, just by way of spell, to keep away the meikle horned deil, or any of his subaltern imps who may be on their nightly rounds.

But what shall I write to you?—"The voice said cry," and I said, "what shall I cry?"—O, thou spirit! whatever thou art, or wherever thou makest thyself visible! be thou a bogle by the eerie side of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen through which the herd-callan maun bicker in his gloamin route frae the faulde!—Be thou a brownie, set, at dead of night, to thy task by the blazing ingle, or in the solitary barn, where the repercussions of thy iron flail half affright thyself, as thou performest the work of twenty of the sons of men, ere the cock-crowing summon thee to thy

ample cog of substantial brose.—Be thou a kelpie, haunting the ford or ferry, in the starless night, mixing thy laughing yell with the howling of the storm and the roaring of the flood, as thou viewest the perils and miseries of man on the foundering horse, or in the tumbling boat!—Or, lastly, be thou a ghost, paying thy nocturnal visits to the hoary ruins of decayed grandeur; or performing thy mystic rites in the shadow of the time-worn church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent, ghastly dwellings of the dead around thee; or taking thy stand by the bedside of the villain, or the murderer, pourtraying on his dreaming fancy, pictures, dreadful as the horrors of unveiled hell, and terrible as the wrath of incensed deity!—Come, thou spirit, but not in these horrid forms; come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations, which thou breathest round the wig of a prating advocate, or the tete of a tea-sipping gossip, while their tongues run at the light-horse gallop of clishmaclaver for ever and ever—come and assist a poor devil who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an idea among half a hundred words; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not got one single sentence of recollection, information, or remark worth putting pen to paper for.

I feel, I feel the presence of supernatural assistance! circled in the embrace of my elbow-chair, my breast labours, like the bloated sybil on her three-footed stool, and like her too, labours with nonsense.—Nonsense, auspicious name! Tutor, friend, and finger-post in the mystic mazes of law; the cadaverous paths of physic; and particularly in the sightless soarings of *school divinity*, who, leaving common sense confounded at his strength of pinion, reason delirious with eying his giddy flight, and truth creeping back into the bottom of her well, cursing the hour that ever she offered her scorned alliance to the wizard power of theologic vision—raves abroad on all the winds. "On earth discord! a gloomy heaven above, opening her jealous gates to the nineteen thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! and below, an inescapable and inexorable hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals!!!"—O doctrine! comfortable and healing to the weary, wounded soul of man! Ye sons and daughters of affliction, ye *pauvres miserables*, to whom day brings no pleasure, and night yields no rest, be comforted! "'Tis but *one* to nineteen hundred thousand that your situation will mend in this world;" so, alas! the experience of the poor and the needy too often affirms; and 'tis nineteen hundred thousand to *one*, by the dogmas of ********, that you will be damned eternally in the world to come!

But of all nonsense, religious nonsense is the most nonsensical; so enough, and more than enough of it. Only, by the bye, will you, or can you tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a sectarian turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalize the heart? They are orderly; they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful: but still your children of sanctity move among their fellow creatures with a nostril snuffing putrescence, and a foot spurning filth, in short, with a conceited dignity that your titled * * * * * * * * * * or any other of your Scottish lordlings of seven centuries standing, display when they accidentally mix among the many-aproned sons of mechanical life. I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave.—How ignorant are plough-boys!—Nay, I have since discovered that a *godly woman* may be a ***** !—But hold—Here's t'ye again—this rum is generous Antigua, so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

Apropos, how do you like, I mean *really* like, the married life? Ah, my friend! matrimony is quite a different thing from what your love-sick youths and sighing girls take it to be! But marriage, we are told, is appointed by God, and I shall never quarrel with any of his institutions. I am a husband of older standing than you, and shall give you *my* ideas of the conjugal state (*en passant*; you know I am no Latinist, is not *conjugal* derived from *jugum*, a yoke?). Well then, the scale of good wifeship, I divide into ten parts:—goodnature, four; good sense, two; wit, one; personal charms, viz. a sweet face, eloquent eyes, fine limbs, graceful carriage (I would add a fine waist too, but that is so soon spoilt, you know), all these, one; as for the other qualities belonging to, or attending on a wife, such as fortune, connexions, education (I mean education extraordinary), family blood, &c. divide the two remaining degrees among them as you please; only, remember that all these minor properties must be expressed by *fractions*, for there is not any one of them, in the aforesaid scale, entitled to the dignity of an *integer*.

As for the rest of my fancies and reveries—how I lately met with miss L—— B——, the most beautiful, elegant woman in the world—how I accompanied her and her father's family fifteen miles on their journey, out of pure devotion, to admire the loveliness of the works of God, in such an unequalled display of them—how, in galloping home at night, I made a ballad on her, of which these two stanzas make a part—

Thou, bonnie L——, art a queen,
Thy subjects we before thee;
Thou, bonnie L——, art divine,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The very deil he could na scathe
Whatever wad belang thee!
He'd look into thy bonnie face
And say, 'I canna wrang thee.'

—behold all these things are written in the chronicles of my imaginations, and shall be read by thee, my dear friend, and by thy beloved spouse, my other dear friend, at a more convenient season.

Now, to thee, and to thy before-designed *bosom-companion*, be given the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things brought forth by the moon, and the benignest influences of the stars, and the living streams which flow from the fountains of life, and by the tree of life, for ever and ever! Amen!

No. CXXXIII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Dumfries, 24th September, 1792.

I have this moment, my dear madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind reproaches, your news, &c. are out of my head when I read and think on Mrs. H——'s situation. Good God! a heart-wounded helpless young woman—in a strange, foreign land, and that land convulsed with every horror that can harrow the human feelings—sick—looking, longing for a comforter, but finding none—a mother's feelings, too—but it is too much: he who wounded (he only can) may He heal*!

* * * * * * * * *

I wish the farmer great joy of his new acquisition to his family. * * * * * * * I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, a *cursed life!* As to a laird farming his own property; sowing his own corn in hope; and reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in gladness; knowing that none can say unto him, "what dost thou?"—fattening his herds; shearing his flocks; rejoicing at Christmas; and begetting sons and daughters, until he be the venerated, grey-haired leader of a little tribe—'tis a heavenly life! but devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat.

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified, as to seeing me when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs. B——, until her nine months race is run, which may perhaps be in three or four weeks. She, too, seems determined to make me the patriarchal leader of a band. However, if heaven will be so obliging as to let me have them on the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to shew a set of boys that will do honour to my cares and name; but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor; a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos, your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory, and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart: you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

No. CXXXIV.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Supposed to have been written on the death of Mrs. H——, her daughter.

I had been from home, and did not receive your letter until my return the other day. What shall I say to comfort you, my much-valued, much-afflicted friend? I can but grieve with you; consolation I have none to offer, except that which religion holds out to the children of affliction—*children of affliction!*—how just the expression! and, like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see, and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to have, any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas! madam, who would wish for many years! What is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire, and leave us in a night of misery: like the gloom which blots out the stars one by one, from the face of night, and leaves us, without a ray of comfort, in the howling waste!

I am interrupted, and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

No. CXXXV.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Dumfries, 6th December, 1792.

I shall be in Ayrshire, I think, next week; and if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much esteemed friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop-house.

Alas, madam! how seldom do we meet in this world, that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness! I have not passed half the ordinary term of an old man's life, and yet I scarcely look over the obituary of a newspaper, that I do not see some names that I have known, and which I, and other acquaintances, little thought to meet with there so soon. Every other instance of the mortality of our kind, makes us cast an anxious look into the dreadful abyss of uncertainty, and shudder with apprehension for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different individuals! Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life, more than another! A few years ago, I could have lain down in the dust, "careless of the voice of the morning;" and now not a few, and these most helpless individuals, would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both their "staff and shield." By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition; Mrs. B—— having given me a fine girl since I wrote you. There is a charming passage in Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora*,

"The valiant, *in himself* what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his *single* woes?" &c.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly, alas! too peculiarly apposite, my dear madam, to your present frame of mind:

"Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
Glad o'er the summer main? the tempest comes.
The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies

* This much lamented lady was gone to the south of France with her infant son, where she died soon after. E.

Lamenting.—Heavens! if privileged from trial,
How cheap a thing were virtue!"

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favourite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a favourite one, from his *Alfred*.

"Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life; to life itself,
With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose."

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed, when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded than that of the imagination; so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into one another; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its few notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is religion—speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says,

"'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright." &c. *as in p.* 190.

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e'en scribble out t'other sheet. We in this country here, have many alarms of the reforming, or rather the republican spirit, of your part of the kingdom. Indeed we are a good deal in commotion ourselves. For me, I am *a placeman*, you know; a very humble one indeed, heaven knows, but still so much as to gag me. What my private sentiments are, you will find out without an interpreter.

* * * * * * * * *

I have taken up the subject in another view, and the other day, for a pretty actress's benefit-night, I wrote an address, which I will give on the other page, called *The Rights of Woman*.

. . . . . .

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN.

An occasional address spoken by Miss Fontenelle, on her benefit-night.

While Europe's eye is fix'd on mighty things,
The fate of empires and the fall of kings,
While quacks of state must each produce his plan,
And even children lisp *the Rights of Man*;
Amid this mighty fuss just let me mention,
The rights of woman merit some attention.

First, in the sexes' intermix'd connexion,
One sacred right of woman is *protection*.—
The tender flower that lifts its head, elate,
Helpless, must fall before the blasts of fate,
Sunk on the earth, defac'd its lovely form,
Unless your shelter ward th' impending storm.—

Our second right—but needless here is caution,
To keep that right inviolate's the fashion,
Each man of sense has it so full before him,
He'd die before he'd wrong it—'tis *decorum*.—
There was, indeed, in far less polish'd days,
A time, when rough rude man had naughty ways;
Would swagger, swear, get drunk, kick up a riot,
Nay, even thus invade a lady's quiet.—
Now, thank our stars! these Gothic times are fled;
Now, well-bred men—and you are all well-bred—
Most justly think (and we are much the gainers)
Such conduct neither spirit, wit, nor manners*.

For right the third, our last, our best, our dearest,
That right to fluttering female hearts the nearest,
Which even the rights of kings in low prostration
Most humbly own—'tis dear, dear *admiration!*
In that blest sphere alone we live and move;
There taste that life of life—immortal love.—
Smiles, glances, sighs, tears, fits, flirtations, airs,
'Gainst such an host what flinty savage dares?—
When awful beauty joins with all her charms,
Who is so rash as rise in rebel arms?

But truce with kings, and truce with constitutions,
With bloody armaments and revolutions;
Let majesty your first attention summon,
Ah! ça ira! the majesty of woman!

I shall have the honour of receiving your criticisms in person at Dunlop.

No. CXXXVI.

To Miss B*****, of YORK.

Madam, 21*st March*, 1793.

Among many things for which I envy those hale, long-lived old fellows before the flood, is this in particular, that when they met with any body after their own heart, they had a charming long prospect of many, many happy meetings with them in after-life.

Now, in this short, stormy, winter day of our fleeting existence, when you now and then, in the chapter of accidents, meet an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you, that you shall never meet with that valued character more. On the other hand, brief as this miserable being is, it is none of the least of the miseries belonging to it, that if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill run of the chances shall be so against you, that in the overtakings, turnings, and jostlings of life, pop, at some unlucky corner, eternally comes the wretch upon you, and will not allow your indignation or contempt a moment's repose. As I am a sturdy

* Ironical allusion to the saturnalia of the *Caledonian hunt*.

believer in the powers of darkness, I take these to be the doings of that old author of mischief, the devil. It is well known that he has some kind of short-hand way of taking down our thoughts, and I make no doubt, that he is perfectly acquainted with my sentiments, respecting Miss B——; how much I admired her abilities and valued her worth, and how very fortunate I thought myself in her acquaintance. For this last reason, my dear madam, I must entertain no hopes of the very great pleasure of meeting with you again.

Miss H—— tells me that she is sending a packet to you, and I beg leave to send you the inclosed sonnet, though to tell you the real truth, the sonnet is a mere pretence, that I may have the opportunity of declaring with how much respectful esteem I have the honour to be, &c.

No. CXXXVII.

To Miss C****.

Madam, *August*, 1793.

Some rather unlooked for accidents have prevented my doing myself the honour of a second visit to Arbeigland, as I was so hospitably invited, and so positively meant to have done.—However, I still hope to have that pleasure before the busy months of harvest begin.

I inclose you two of my late pieces, as some kind of return for the pleasure I have received in perusing a certain MS. volume of poems in the possession of captain Riddel. To repay one with an *old song*, is a proverb, whose force you, madam, I know, will not allow. What is said of illustrious descent is, I believe, equally true of a talent for poetry: none ever despised it who had pretensions to it. The fates and characters of the rhyming tribe often employ my thoughts when I am disposed to be melancholy. There is not among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets.—In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear. Take a being of our kind, give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility, which between them will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary, such as arranging wild flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some pursuit, which shall eternally mislead him from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasures that lucre can purchase; lastly, fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity, and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a poet. To you, madam, I need not recount the fairy pleasures the muse bestows to counterbalance this catalogue of evils. Bewitching poetry is like bewitching woman; she has in all ages been accused of misleading mankind from the counsels of wisdom and the paths of prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them with poverty, branding them with infamy and plunging them in the whirling vortex of ruin; yet, where is the man but must own that all our happiness on earth is not worthy the name—that even the holy hermit's solitary prospect of paradisaical bliss is but the glitter of a northern sun, rising over a frozen region, compared with the many pleasures, the nameless raptures that we owe to the lovely queen of the heart of man!

No. CXXXVIII.

To JOHN M'MURDO, Esq.

Sir, *December*, 1793.

It is said that we take the greatest liberties with our greatest friends, and I pay myself a very high compliment in the manner in which I am going to apply the remark. I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man.—Here is Ker's account, and here are six guineas; and now, I don't owe a shilling to man—or woman either. But for these damned dirty, dog's-eared little pages*, I had done myself the honour to have waited on you long ago. Independent of the obligations your hospitality has laid me under; the consciousness of your superiority in the rank of man and gentleman, of itself, was fully as much as I could ever make head against; but to owe you money too, was more than I could face.

I think I once mentioned something of a collection of Scots songs I have, for some years, been making: I send you a perusal of what I have got together. I could not, conveniently, spare them above five or six days, and five or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you. A very few of them are my own. When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr. Clint, of the king's-arms. There is not another copy of the collection in the world; and I should be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains.

No. CXXXIX.

To Mrs. R******,

Who was to bespeak a play one evening at the Dumfries theatre.

I am thinking to send my *Address* to some periodical publication, but it has not got your sanction, so pray look over it.

As to the Tuesday's play, let me beg of you, my dear madam, to give us, *The Wonder*, *A Woman keeps a Secret*; to which please add, *The Spoilt Child*—you will highly oblige me by so doing.

Ah, what an enviable creature you are! There now, this cursed gloomy blue-devil day, you are going to a party of choice spirits—

"To play the shapes
Of frolic fancy, and incessant form

* Scottish bank notes.

Those rapid pictures, that assembled train
Of fleet ideas, never join'd before,
Where lively *wit* excites to gay surprise;
Or folly-painting *humour*, grave himself,
Calls laughter forth, deep-shaping every nerve."

But as you rejoice with them that do rejoice, do also remember to weep with them that weep, and pity your melancholy friend.

No. CXL.

To a LADY,

In favour of a player's benefit.

Madam,

You were so very good as to promise me to honour my friend with your presence on his benefit-night. That night is fixed for Friday first; the play a most interesting one: *The way to keep him.* I have the pleasure to know Mr. G. well. His merit as an actor is generally acknowledged. He has genius and worth which would do honour to patronage: he is a poor and modest man; claims which from their very *silence* have the more forcible power on the generous heart. Alas, for pity! that from the indolence of those, who have the good things of this life in their gift, too often does brazen-fronted importunity snatch that boon, the rightful due of retiring, humble want! Of all the qualities we assign to the author and director of nature, by far the most enviable is—to be able "to wipe away all tears from all eyes." O what insignificant, sordid wretches are they, however chance may have loaded them with wealth, who go to their graves, to their magnificent *mausoleums*, with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor honest heart happy!

But I crave your pardon, madam: I came to beg, not to preach.

No. CXLI.

EXTRACT of a LETTER

To Mr. ——

1794.

I am extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests, in a letter which Mr. S*** shewed me. At present my situation in life must be, in a great measure, stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisor's list; and as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed *of course*—then, a friend might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom, which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about a hundred and twenty, to two hundred a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collector's list; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies much from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list, and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me, to say, that I do not need or would not be indebted to a political friend; at the same time, sir, I, by no means, lay my affairs before you thus, to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I will petition your goodness with the same frankness and sincerity as I now do myself the honour to subscribe myself, &c.

No. CXLII.

To Mrs. R*****.

Dear madam,

I meant to have called on you yesternight, but as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view, was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon, guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my weather-beaten rustic phiz a part of your box-furniture on Tuesday; when we may arrange the business of the visit.

* * * * * * * *

Among the profusion of idle compliments, which insidious craft, or unmeaning folly, incessantly offer at your shrine—a shrine, how far exalted above such adoration—permit me, were it but for rarity's sake, to pay you the honest tribute of a warm heart, and an independent mind; and to assure you, that I am, thou most amiable, and most accomplished of thy sex, with the most respectful esteem, and fervent regard, thine, &c.

No. CXLIII.

To THE SAME.

I will wait on you, my ever-valued friend, but whether in the morning I am not sure. Sunday closes a period of our eurst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen until noon. Fine employment for a poet's pen! There is a species of the human genius that I call *the gin-horse class:* what enviable dogs they are! Round, and round, and round they go,—Mundell's ox, that drives his cotton mill, is their exact prototype—without an idea or wish beyond their circle; fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, and—— melange of fretfulness and melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of

the other to repose me in torpor: my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement, like a wild finch, caught amid the horrors of winter, and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied, when he foretold—"And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper!" If my resentment is awaked, it is sure to be where it dare not squeak; and if—

* * * * * * *

Pray that wisdom and bliss be more frequent visitors of R. B.

No. CXLIV.

To THE SAME.

I have this moment got the song from S***, and I am sorry to see that he has spoilt it a good deal. It shall be a lesson to me how I lend him any thing again.

I have sent you *Werter*, truly happy to have any the smallest opportunity of obliging you.

'Tis true, madam, I saw you once since I was at W——; and that once froze the very life-blood of my heart. Your reception of me was such, that a wretch meeting the eye of his judge, about to pronounce sentence of death on him, could only have envied my feelings and situation. But I hate the theme, and never more shall write or speak on it.

One thing I shall proudly say, that I can pay Mrs. —— a higher tribute of esteem, and appreciate her amiable worth more truly, than any man whom I have seen approach her.

No. CXLV.

To THE SAME.

I have often told you, my dear friend, that you had a spice of caprice in your composition, and you have as often disavowed it; even, perhaps, while your opinions were, at the moment, irrefragably proving it. Could *any thing* estrange me from a friend such as you?—No! to-morrow I shall have the honour of waiting on you.

Farewell, thou first of friends, and most accomplished of women; even with all thy little caprices!

No. CXLVI.

To THE SAME.

Madam,

I return your common-place book. I have perused it with much pleasure, and would have continued my criticisms, but as it seems the critic has forfeited your esteem, his strictures must lose their value.

If it is true that "offences come only from the heart," before you I am guiltless. To admire, esteem, and prize you, as the most accomplished of women, and the first of friends—if these are crimes, I am the most offending thing alive.

In a face where I used to meet the kind complacency of friendly confidence, *now* to find cold neglect, and contemptuous scorn—is a wrench that my heart can ill bear. It is, however, some kind of miserable good luck, that while *de haut en bas* rigour may depress an unoffending wretch to the ground, it has a tendency to rouse a stubborn something in his bosom, which, though it cannot heal the wounds of his soul, is at least an opiate to blunt their poignancy.

With the profoundest respect for your abilities; the most sincere esteem, and ardent regard, for your gentle heart and amiable manners; and the most fervent wish and prayer for your welfare, peace, and bliss, I have the honour to be, madam, your most devoted humble servant.

No. CXLVII.

To JOHN SYME, Esq.

You know that among other high dignities, you have the honour to be my supreme court of critical judicature, from which there is no appeal. I inclose you a song which I composed since I saw you, and I am going to give you the history of it. Do you know that among much that I admire in the characters and manners of those great folks whom I have now the honour to call my acquaintances, the O***** family, there is nothing charms me more than Mr. O.'s unconcealable attachment to that incomparable woman. Did you ever, my dear Syme, meet with a man, who owed more to the divine Giver of all good things than Mr. O.? A fine fortune; a pleasing exterior; self-evident amiable dispositions, and an ingenuous upright mind, and that informed too, much beyond the usual run of young fellows of his rank and fortune: and to all this, such a woman!—but of her I shall say nothing at all, in despair of saying any thing adequate: in my song, I have endeavoured to do justice to what would be his feelings, on seeing in the scene I have drawn, the habitation of his Luey. As I am a good deal pleased with my performance, I, in my first fervour, thought of sending it to Mrs. O——, but, on second thoughts, perhaps what I offer as the honest incense of genuine respect, might, from the well-known character of poverty and poetry, be construed into some modification or other of that servility which my soul abhors*.

No. CXLVIII.

To Miss ——

Madam,

Nothing short of a kind of absolute necessity could have made me trouble you with this letter.

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* The song inclosed was that beginning,

O wat ye wha's in yon town? E.

Except my ardent and just esteem for your sense, taste, and worth, every sentiment arising in my breast, as I put pen to paper to you, is painful. The scenes I have past with the friend of my soul, and his amiable connexions! the wrench at my heart to think that he is gone, for ever gone from me, never more to meet in the wanderings of a weary world! and the cutting reflection of all, that I had most unfortunately, though most undeservedly, lost the confidence of that soul of worth, ere it took its flight!

These, madam, are sensations of no ordinary anguish.—However you, also, may be offended with some *imputed* improprieties of mine; sensibility you know I possess, and sincerity none will deny me.

To oppose those prejudices which have been raised against me, is not the business of this letter. Indeed it is a warfare I know not how to wage. The powers of positive vice I can in some degree calculate, and against direct malevolence I can be on my guard; but who can estimate the fatuity of giddy caprice, or ward off the unthinking mischief of precipitate folly?

I have a favour to request of you, madam; and of your sister Mrs. ——, through your means. You know that, at the wish of my late friend, I made a collection of all my trifles in verse which I had ever written. They are many of them local, some of them puerile and silly, and all of them unfit for the public eye. As I have some little fame at stake, a fame that, I trust, may live, when the hate of those, who "watch for my halting," and the contumelious sneer of those, whom accident has made my superiors, will, with themselves, be gone to the regions of oblivion; I am uneasy now for the fate of those manuscripts.—Will Mrs. —— have the goodness to destroy them, or return them to me? As a pledge of friendship they were bestowed; and that circumstance indeed was all their merit. Most unhappily for me, that merit they no longer possess, and I hope that Mrs. —— goodness, which I well know, and ever will revere, will not refuse this favour to a man whom she once held in some degree of estimation.

With the sincerest esteem, I have the honour to be, madam, &c.

No. CXLIX.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

25th February, 1794.

Canst thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul, tost on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame, tremblingly alive as the tortures of suspence, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries, with thy inquiries after me?

* * * * * * *

For these two months I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep incurable taint of hypochondria, which poisons my existence. Of late a number of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these ***** times; losses, which, though trifling, were yet what I could ill bear, have so irritated me, that my feelings, at times, could only be envied by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings; but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the gospel; he might melt and mould the hearts of those around him, but his own kept its native incorrigibility.

Still there are two great pillars that bear us up, amid the wreck of misfortune and misery. The *one* is composed of the different modifications of a certain noble, stubborn something in man, known by the names of courage, fortitude, magnanimity. The *other* is made up of those feelings and sentiments, which, however the sceptic may deny them, or the enthusiast disfigure them, are yet, I am convinced, original and component parts of the human soul; those *senses of the mind*, if I may be allowed the expression, which connect us with, and link us to, those awful obscure realities—an all-powerful and equally beneficent God; and a world to come, beyond death and the grave. The first gives the nerve of combat, while a ray of hope beams on the field;—the last pours the balm of comfort into the wounds which time can never cure.

I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that you and I ever talked on the subject of religion at all. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of the crafty *few*, to lead the undiscerning *many*; or, at most, as an uncertain obscurity, which mankind can never know any thing of, and with which they are fools if they give themselves much to do. Nor would I quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than I would for his want of a musical ear. I would regret that he was shut out from what, to me and to others, were such superlative sources of enjoyment. It is in this point of view, and for this reason, that I will deeply imbue the mind of every child of mine with religion. If my son should happen to be a man of feeling, sentiment, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart; and an imagination, delighted with the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him, wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift, delighting degrees, is rapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson,

"These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God.—The rolling year
Is full of thee."

And so on in all the spirit and ardour of that charming hymn.

These are no ideal pleasures; they are real delights; and I ask what of the delights among the sons of men are superior, not to say equal, to them? And they have this precious, vast addition, that conscious virtue stamps them for her own; and lays hold on them to bring herself into the presence of a witnessing, judging, and approving God.

No. CL.

To Mrs. R*****.

Supposes himself to be writing from the dead to the living.

Madam,

I dare say this is the first epistle you ever received from this nether world. I write you from the regions of hell, amid the horrors of the damned. The time and manner of my leaving your earth I do not exactly know; as I took my departure in the heat of a fever of intoxication, contracted at your too hospitable mansion; but on my arrival here, I was fairly tried, and sentenced to endure the purgatorial tortures of this infernal confine, for the space of ninety-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days; and all on account of the impropriety of my conduct yesternight under your roof. Here am I, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, with my aching head reclined on a pillow of ever-piercing thorn, while an infernal tormentor, wrinkled, and old, and cruel, his name I think is *Recollection*, with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake. Still, madam, if I could, in any measure, be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle whom my conduct last night so much injured, I think it would be an alleviation to my torments. For this reason I trouble you with this letter. To the men of the company I will make no apology.—Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me; and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt. But to you, madam, I have much to apologize. Your good opinion I valued as one of the greatest acquisitions I had made on earth, and I was truly a beast to forfeit it. There was a Miss I—— too, a woman of fine sense, gentle, and unassuming manners—do make, on my part, a miserable d——d wretch's best apology to her. A Mrs. G——, a charming woman, did me the honour to be prejudiced in my favour; this makes me hope that I have not outraged her beyond all forgiveness.—To all the other ladies please present my humblest contrition for my conduct, and my petition for their gracious pardon, O all ye powers of decency and decorum! whisper to them that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts—that it was not in my nature to be brutal to any one—that to be rude to a woman, when in my senses, was impossible with me—but—

* * * * * * * * *

Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me! spare me!

Forgive the offences, and pity the perdition of, madam, your humble slave.

No. CLI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

My dear friend, *15th December*, 1795.

As I am in a complete Decemberish humour, gloomy, sullen, stupid, as even the deity of Dulness herself could wish, I shall not drawl out a heavy letter with a number of heavier apologies for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because I know you will sympathize in it: these four months, a sweet little girl, my youngest child, has been so ill, that every day, a week or less threatened to terminate her existence. There had much need be many pleasures annexed to the states of husband and father, for, God knows, they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to you the anxious, sleepless hours these ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless little folks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate; even in all the vigour of manhood as I am—such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock! 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune!—A father on his death-bed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I—but I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad—

"O that I had ne'er been married,
I would never had nae care;
Now I've gotten wife and bairns,
They cry, crowdie! evermair.

Crowdie! ance; crowdie! twice;
Crowdie! three times in a day:
An ye crowdie ony mair,
Ye'll crowdie a' my meal away."—

* * * * * * * * *

December 24th.

We have had a brilliant theatre here, this season; only, as all other business does, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country, *want of cash*. I mention our theatre merely to lug in an occasional *Address* which I wrote for the benefit-night of one of the actresses, and which is as follows—

ADDRESS,

Spoken by Miss Fontenelle on her benefit-night, December 4th, 1795, at the theatre, Dumfries.

Still anxious to secure your partial favour,
And not less anxious, sure, this night, than ever,
A prologue, epilogue, or some such matter,
'Twould vamp my bill, said I, if nothing better;
So, sought a poet, roosted near the skies,
Told him, I came to feast my curious eyes;
Said, nothing like his works was ever printed;
And last, my prologue-business slily hinted.—
"Ma'am, let me tell you," quoth my man of rhymes,
"I know your bent—these are no laughing times:
Can you—but, miss, I own I have my fears—
Dissolve in pause—and sentimental tears—
With laden sighs, and solemn-rounded sentence,
Rouse from his sluggish slumbers, fell Repentance;
Paint Vengeance as he takes his horrid stand,
Waving on high the desolating brand,
Calling the storms to bear him o'er a guilty land?"

I could no more—askance the creature eyeing,
D'ye think, said I, this face was made for crying?
I'll laugh, that's poz—nay more, the world shall know it;
And so, your servant! gloomy master Poet!

Firm as my creed, sirs, 'tis my fix'd belief,
That misery's another word for grief:
I also think—so may I be a bride!
That so much laughter, so much life enjoy'd.—

Thou man of crazy care, and ceaseless sigh,
Still under bleak misfortune's blasting eye;
Doom'd to that sorest task of man alive—
To make three guineas do the work of five:
Laugh in Misfortune's face—the beldam witch!
Say, you'll be merry, though you can't be rich.

Thou other man of care, the wretch in love,
Who long with jiltish arts and airs hast strove;
Who, as the boughs all temptingly project,
Measur'st in desperate thought—a rope—thy neck—
Or, where the beetling cliff o'erhangs the deep,
Peerest to nepitate the healing leap:
Would'st thou be cur'd, thou silly, moping elf?
Laugh at her follies—laugh e'en at thyself:
Learn to despise those frowns now so terrific,
And love a kinder—that's your grand specific.—

To sum up all, be merry, I advise;
And as we're merry, may we still be wise.—

. . . . . .

25th, Christmas Morning.

This, my much-loved friend, is a morning of wishes: accept mine—so heaven hear me as they are sincere! that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not! In the charming words of my favourite author, *The Man of Feeling*, "May the great Spirit bear up the weight of thy grey hairs; and blunt the arrow that brings them rest!"

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? Is not the *Task* a glorious poem? The religion of the *Task*, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature: the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were not you to send me your *Zeluco* in return for mine? Tell me, how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.

I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters; I mean those which I first sketched, in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which, from time to time, I had parcelled by, as trash that were scarce worth preserving, and which yet at the same time I did not care to destroy; I discovered many of these rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you, except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

No. CLII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP, *in LONDON.*

Dumfries, 20th December, 1795.

I have been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your last to me reached Dumfries, I was in the country, and did not return until too late to answer your letter; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route; and now I know not what is become of you, or whether this may reach you at all.—God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits. Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen, and gossip away whatever comes first, prose or poesy, sermon or song. In this last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honour to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pindar does over the English. I wrote the following for a favourite air.

. . . . . .

December 29th.

Since I began this letter I have been appointed to act in the capacity of supervisor here, and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you, had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary, and during the illness of the present incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form: a consummation devoutly to be wished! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

. . . . . .

This is the season (New-year's day is now my date) of wishing; and mine are most fervently of-

fered up for you! May life to you be a positive blessing while it lasts, for your own sake; and that it may yet be greatly prolonged, is my wish for my own sake, and for the sake of the rest of your friends! What a transient business is life! Very lately I was a boy; but t'other day I was a young man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth, and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had, in early days, religion strongly impressed on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one, as to which sect he belongs to, or what creed he believes; but I look on the man, who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment; a firm prop and sure stay, in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress; and a never-failing anchor of hope, when he looks beyond the grave.

. . . . . .

January 12th.

You will have seen our worthy and ingenious friend, the doctor, long ere this. I hope he is well, and beg to be remembered to him. I have just been reading over again, I dare say for the hundred and fiftieth time, his *View of Society and Manners;* and still I read it with delight. His humour is perfectly original—it is neither the humour of Addison, nor Swift, nor Sterne, nor of any body but Dr. Moore. By the bye, you have deprived me of *Zeluco;* remember that, when you are disposed to rake up the sins of my neglect from among the ashes of my laziness.

He has paid me a pretty compliment, by quoting me in his last publication*.

* * * * * * *

No. CLIII.

To Mrs. R*****.

20th January, 1796.

I cannot express my gratitude to you for allowing me a longer perusal of *Anacharsis*. In fact I never met with a book that bewitched me so much; and as a member of the library must warmly feel the obligation you have laid us under. Indeed, to me, the obligation is stronger than to any other individual of our society; as *Anacharsis* is an indispensible desideratum to a son of the muses.

The health you wished me in your morning's card, is, I think, flown from me for ever. I have not been able to leave my bed to-day till about an hour ago. These wickedly unlucky advertisements I lent (I did wrong) to a friend, and I am ill able to go in quest of him.

The muses have not quite forsaken me. The following detached stanzas I intend to interweave in some disastrous tale of a shepherd.

* * * * * * * *

No. CLIV.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

31st January, 1796.

These many months you have been two packets in my debt—what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend, I am utterly at a loss to guess. Alas! madam, ill can I afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until, after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
Affliction purifies the visual ray,
Religion hails the drear, the untried night,
And shuts, for ever shuts! life's doubtful day.

No. CLV.

To Mrs. R******,

Who had desired him to go to the Birth-day Assembly on that day to shew his loyalty.

4th June, 1796.

I am in such miserable health as to be utterly incapable of shewing my loyalty in any way. Rackt as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every face with a greeting like that of Balak to Balaam,—"Come curse me, Jacob; and come defy me Israel!" So say I—Come curse me, that east wind; and come defy me, the north! Would you have me in such circumstances copy you out a love-song?

* * * * * * *

I may perhaps see you on Saturday, but I will not be at the ball.—Why should I? "man delights not me, nor woman either!" Can you supply me with the song, *Let us all be unhappy together*—do if you can, and oblige *le pauvre miserable*

R. B.

* Edward.

No. CLVI.

To Mr. CUNNINGHAM.

Brow, Sea-bathing quarters, 7th July, 1796.

My dear Cunningham,

I received yours here this moment, and am indeed highly flattered with the approbation of the literary circle you mention; a literary circle inferior to none in the two kingdoms. Alas! my friend, I fear the voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more! For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bedfast, and sometimes not; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage. You actually would not know me if you saw me. —Pale, emaciated, and so feeble, as occasionally to need help from my chair—my spirits fled! fled!—but I can no more on the subject—only the medical folks tell me that my last and only chance is bathing and country quarters, and riding.—The deuce of the matter is this: when an exciseman is off duty, his salary is reduced to 35*l.* instead of 50*l.*—What way, in the name of thrift, shall I maintain myself, and keep a horse in country quarters —with a wife and five children at home, on 35*l.*? I mention this, because I had intended to beg your utmost interest, and that of all the friends you can muster, to move our commissioners of excise to grant me the full salary.—I dare say you know them all personally. If they do not grant it me, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poete;* if I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger.

I have sent you one of the songs; the other my memory does not serve me with, and I have no copy here; but I shall be at home soon, when I will send it you.—Apropos to being at home, Mrs. Burns threatens, in a week or two, to add one more to my paternal charge, which, if of the right gender, I intend shall be introduced to the world by the respectable designation of *Alexander Cunningham Burns*. My last was *James Glencairn*, so you can have no objection to the company of nobility. Farewell.

No. CLVII.

To Mrs. BURNS.

My dearest love, *Brow, Thursday.*

I delayed writing until I could tell you what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce. It would be injustice to deny that it has eased my pains, and I think has strengthened me; but my appetite is still extremely bad. No flesh nor fish can I swallow: porridge and milk are the only thing I can taste. I am very happy to hear by miss Jess Lewars, that you are all well. My very best and kindest compliments to her and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband, R. B.

No. CLVIII.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Madam, *Brow, 12th July*, 1796.

I have written you so often, without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again, but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that *bourne whence no traveller returns*. Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell!!! R. B.

The above is supposed to be the last production of Robert Burns, who died on the 21st of the month, nine days afterwards. He had however the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children; an assurance that has been amply fulfilled.

It is probable that the greater part of her letters to him were destroyed by our bard about the time that this last was written. He did not foresee that his own letters to her, were to appear in print, nor conceive the disappointment that will be felt, that a few of this excellent lady's have not served to enrich and adorn the collection. E.

POEMS,

FORMERLY PUBLISHED,

WITH SOME ADDITIONS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A HISTORY OF THESE POEMS,

BY GILBERT BURNS.

DEDICATION

Of the Second Edition of the Poems formerly printed.

TO THE

NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN

OF THE

CALEDONIAN HUNT.

My lords and gentlemen,

A Scottish bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service, where shall he so properly look for patronage, as to the illustrious names of his native land; those who bear the honours and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The poetic Genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha —at the *plough;* and threw her inspiring *mantle* over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue: I tuned my wild, artless notes, as she inspired.—She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my songs under your honoured protection: I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my lords and gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favours; that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning, that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favours: I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country, that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated; and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the great fountain of honour, the Monarch of the Universe, for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the echoes, in the ancient and favourite amusement of your forefathers, may Pleasure ever be of your party; and may Social Joy await your return: when harassed in courts or camps with the justlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured worth, attend your return to your native seats; and may Domestic Happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May Corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find you an inexorable foe!

I have the honour to be,
With the sincerest gratitude,
and highest respect,
My lords and gentlemen,
Your most devoted, humble servant,
ROBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh,
April 4th, 1787.

POEMS,

CHIEFLY

SCOTTISH.

THE TWA DOGS.

A TALE.

'TWAS in that place o' Scotland's isle,
That bears the name o' *Auld King Coil*,
Upon a bonnie day in June,
When wearing thro' the afternoon,
Twa dogs that were na thrang at hame,
Forgather'd ance upon a time.

The first I'll name, they ca'd him *Cæsar*,
Was keepit for his honour's pleasure:
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
Shew'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs;
But whalpit some place far abroad,
Where sailors gang to fish for cod.

His locked, letter'd, braw brass collar,
Shew'd him the gentleman and scholar:
But though he was o' high degree,
The fient a pride na pride had he;
But wad hae spent an hour caressin,
Ev'n wi' a tinkler-gypsey's messin.
At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
Nae tawted tyke, tho' e'er sae duddie,
But he wad stan't, as glad to see him,
And stroan't on stanes an' hillocks wi' him.

The tither was a ploughman's collie,
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie,
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had *Luath* ca'd him,
After some dog in Highland sang*,
Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang.

He was a gash an' faithful tyke,
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke.
His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face,
Aye gat him friends in ilka place.
His breast was white, his towzie back
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gawcie tail, wi' upward curl,
Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl.

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither,
An' unco pack an' thick thegither;
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd and snowkit,
Whyles mice an' moudieworts they howkit;
Whyles scour'd awa in lang excursion,
An' worry'd ither in diversion;
Until, wi' daffin weary grown,
Upon a knowe they sat them down,
And there began a long digression
About the *lords o' the creation.*

CÆSAR.

I've aften wonder'd, honest *Luath*,
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;
An' when the gentry's life I saw,
What way poor bodies lived ava.
Our laird gets in his racked rents,
His cols, his kain, and a' his stents:
He rises when he likes himsel;
His flunkies answer at the bell:
He ca's his coach, he ca's his horse;
He draws a bonnie silken purse,
As lang's my tail, whare, thro' the steeks,
The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks.

Frae morn to e'en it's nought but toiling,
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;
An' tho' the gentry first are stechin,
Yet ev'n the ha' folk fill their pechan
Wi' sauce, ragouts, and sick like trashtrie,
That's little short o' downright wastrie.
Our whipper-in, wee blastit wonner,
Poor worthless elf, it eats a dinner
Better than ony tenant man
His honour has in a' the lan':
An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch in,
I own it's past my comprehension.

LUATH.

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they're fash't enough;
A cottar howkin in a sheugh,
Wi' dirty stanes biggin a dyke,
Baring a quarry, and sicklike,
Himself, a wife, he thus sustains,
A smytrie o' wee duddie weans,
An' nought but his han darg, to keep
Them right and tight in thack an' rape.

An' when they meet wi' sair disasters,
Like loss o' health, or want o' masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer,
An' they maun starve o' cauld and hunger;
But, how it comes, I never ken'd yet,
They're maistly wonderfu' contented;
An' buirdly chiels, an' clever hizzies,
Are bred in sick a way as this is.

CÆSAR.

But then to see how ye're negleckit,
How huff'd, and cuff'd, and disrespeckit!

* Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's Fingal.

L—d, man, our gentry care as little
For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle;
They gang as saucy by poor folk,
As I wad by a stinking brock.
I've notic'd, on our laird's court-day,
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash:
He'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear,
He'll apprehend them, poind their gear;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble!
I see how folk live that hae riches;
But surely poor folk maun be wretches!

LUATH.

They're nae sae wretched's ane wad think;
Tho' constantly on poortith's brink:
They're sae accustom'd wi' the sight,
The view o't gies them little fright.
Then chance an' fortune are sae guided,
They're aye in less or mair provided;
An' tho' fatigu'd wi' close employment,
A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.
The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans an' faithfu' wives;
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fire-side.
An' whyles twalpennie worth o' nappy
Can mak the bodies unco happy;
They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the kirk and state affairs:
They'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin,
An' ferlie at the folk in *Lon'on*.
As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns,
They get the jovial, ranting kirns,
When *rural life*, o' ev'ry station,
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth,
Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.
That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty winds;
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
The luntin pipe, an' sneeshin mill,
Are handed round wi' right guid will;
The cantie auld folks crackin crouse,
The young anes rantin thro' the house,—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.
Still it's owre true that ye hae said,
Sic game is now owre often play'd.
There's monie a creditable stock
O' decent, honest, fawsont folk,
Are riven out baith root and branch,
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,
Wha thinks to knit himsel the faster
In favour wi' some gentle master,
Wha' aiblins, thrang a parliamentin,
For Britain's guid his saul indentin—

CÆSAR.

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it;
For Britain's guid! guid faith! I doubt it.
Say rather, gaun as *premiers* lead him,
An' saying *ay* or *no*'s they bid him:
At operas an' plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading;
Or may be, in a frolic daft,
To *Hague* or *Calais* takes a waft,
To make a tour, an' tak a whirl,
To learn *bon ton* an' see the worl'.
There, at *Vienna* or *Versailles*,
He rives his father's auld entails;
Or by *Madrid* he takes the rout,
To thrum guitars, and fecht wi' nowt;
Or down Italian vista startles,
Wh-re-hunting among groves o' myrtles:
Then bouses drumly German water,
To mak himsel look fair and fatter,
An' clear the consequential sorrows,
Love-gifts of carnival signoras.
For Britain's guid! for her destruction!
Wi' dissipation, feud, an' faction.

LUATH.

Hech man! dear sirs! is that the gate
They waste sae mony a braw estate!
Are we sae foughten an' harass'd
For gear to gang that gate at last!
O would they stay aback frae courts,
An' please themsels wi' countra sports,
It wad for ev'ry ane be better,
The laird, the tenant, an' the cotter!
For thae frank, rantin, ramblin billies,
Fient haet o' them's ill-hearted fellows;
Except for breakin o' their timmer,
Or speakin lightly o' their limmer,
Or shootin o' a hare or moor-cock,
The ne'er a bit they're ill to poor folk.
But will ye tell me, master *Cæsar*,
Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure?
Nae cauld or hunger e'er can steer them,
The vera thought o't need na fear them.

CÆSAR.

L—d, man, were ye but whiles whare I am,
The gentles ye wad ne'er envy 'em.
It's true, they need na starve or sweat,
Thro' winter's cauld, or simmer's heat;
They've nae sair wark to craze their banes,
An' fill auld age wi' grips an' granes:
But human bodies are sic fools,
For a' their colleges and schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They make enow themsels to vex them;
An' aye the less they hae to sturt them,
In like proportion, less will hurt them.
A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acre's till'd, he's right enough;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzen's done, she's unco weel:
But gentlemen an' ladies warst,
Wi' ev'ndown want o' wark are curst.
They loiter, lounging, lank, an' lazy;
Tho' deil haet ails them, yet uneasy;
Their days insipid, dull, an' tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang, an' restless;
An' even their sports, their balls an' races,
Their galloping through public places,

There's sic parade, sic pomp, an' art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.
The men cast out in party matches,
Then sowther a' in deep debauches;
Ae night they're mad wi' drink an' wh-ring,
Niest day their life is past enduring.
The ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,
As great and gracious a' as sisters;
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither,
They're a' run deils an' jads thegither.
Whyles, o'er the wee bit cup an' platie,
They sip the scandal potion pretty;
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks,
Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks;
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
An' cheat like onie unhang'd blackguard.
There's some exception, man an' woman;
But this is gentry's life in common.

By this, the sun was out o' sight,
An' darker gloaming brought the night:
The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone;
The kye stood rowtin i' the loan;
When up they gat, and shook their lugs,
Rejoic'd they were na *men* but *dogs*;
An' each took aff his several way,
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.

SCOTCH DRINK.

Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
That's sinking in despair;
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That's prest wi' grief an' care;
There let him bouse, an' deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves *or* debts,
An' minds his griefs no more.
Solomon's Proverbs, xxxi. 6, 7.

Let other poets raise a fracas
'Bout vines, an' wines, an' drunken *Bacchus*,
An' crabbit names an' stories wrack us,
An' grate our lug,
I sing the juice *Scots bear* can mak us,
In glass or jug.

O thou, my *Muse!* guid auld *Scotch Drink*,
Whether thro' wimpling worms thou jink,
Or, richly brown, ream o'er the brink,
In glorious faem,
Inspire me, till I lisp and wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn,
An' aits set up their awnie horn,
An' pease and beans, at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain,
Leeze me on thee, *John Barleycorn*,
Thou king o' grain!

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,
In souple scones, the wale o' food!
Or tumblin in the boiling flood
Wi' kail an' beef;
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
There thou shines chief.

Food fills the wame, an' keeps us livin;
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin,
When heavy dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin;
But, oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down-hill, scrievin,
Wi' rattlin glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labour sair,
At's weary toil;
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Aft, clad in massy siller weed,
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;
Yet humbly kind in time o' need,
The poor man's wine,
His wee drap parritch, or his bread,
Thou kitchens fine.

Thou art the life o' public haunts;
But thee, what were our fairs and rants?
Ev'n godly meetings o' the saunts,
By thee inspir'd,
When gaping they besiege the tents,
Are doubly fir'd.

That merry night we get the corn in,
O sweetly then thou reams the horn in;
Or reekin on a new-year morning
In cog or bicker,
An' just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in,
An' gusty sucker!

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
O rare! to see the fizz an' freath
I' th' lugget caup!
Then *Burnewin** comes on like death
At ev'ry chaup.

Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel;
The brawnie, banie, ploughman chiel,
Brings hard owrehip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel
Wi' dinsome clamour.

When skirlin weanies see the light,
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright,
How fumblin cufs their dearies slight;
Wae worth the name!
Nae howdie gets a social night,
Or plack frae them.

When neebors anger at a plea,
An' just as wud as wud can be,
How easy can the *barley-bree*
Cement the quarrel!
It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee,
To taste the barrel.

Alake! that e'er my muse has reason
To wyte her countrymen wi' treason!

* *Burnewin*—*Burn-the-wind*—the blacksmith—an appropriate title. E.

But monie daily weet their weason
Wi' liquors nice,
An' hardly, in a winter's season,
E'er spier her price.

Wae worth that *brandy*, burning trash!
Fell source o' monie a pain an' brash!
Twins monie a poor, doylt, drunken hash,
O' half his days;
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her worst faes.

Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well!
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell,
Poor plackless devils like mysel!
It sets you ill,
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell,
Or foreign gill.

May gravels round his blather wrench,
An' gouts torment him inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' *whisky punch*
Wi' honest men.

O *Whisky!* soul o' plays an' pranks!
Accept a bardie's humble thanks!
When wanting thee, what tuneless cranks
Are my poor verses!
Thou comes——they rattle i' their ranks
At ither's a---s!

Thee, *Ferintosh!* O sadly lost!
Scotland lament frae coast to coast!
Now colic grips, an' barkin hoast,
May kill us a';
For loyal Forbes' charter'd boast
Is ta'en awa!

Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' excise,
Wha mak the *whisky stells* their prize!
Haud up thy han', deil! ance, twice, thrice!
There, seize the blinkers!
An' bake them up in brunstane pies
For poor d—n'd drinkers.

Fortune! if thou'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, an' *whisky gill*,
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
Tak a' the rest,
An' deal't about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best.

THE AUTHOR'S
EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER*
TO THE SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES IN *THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.*

Dearest of distillation! last and best!——
——How art thou lost!——
Parody on Milton.

Ye Irish lords, ye knights an' squires,
Wha *reprcsent* our brughs an' shires,
An' doucely manage our affairs
In parliament,
To you a simple poet's prayers
Are humbly sent.

Alas! my roupet Muse is hearse!
Your honours' heart wi' grief 'twad pierce,
To see her sittin on her a—
Low i' the dust,
An' scriechin out prosaic verse,
An' like to brust!

Tell them who hae the chief direction,
Scotland an' *me*'s in great affliction,
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction
On *aquavitæ;*
An' rouse them up to strong conviction,
An' move their pity.

Stand forth, an' tell yon *premier youth*,
The honest, open, naked truth:
Tell him o' mine an' Scotland's drouth,
His servants humble:
The muckle devil blaw ye south,
If ye dissemble!

Does ony great man glunch an' gloom?
Speak out, an' never fash your thumb!
Let posts an' pensions sink or soom
Wi' them wha grant 'em:
If honestly they canna come,
Far better want 'em.

In gath'rin votes you were na slack;
Now stand as tightly by your tack;
Ne'er claw your lug, an' fidge your back,
An' hum an' haw;
But raise your arm, an' tell your crack
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greeting owre her thrissle,
Her mutchkin stoup as toom's a whissle:
An' d-mn'd excisemen in a bussle,
Seizin a *stell*,
Triumphant crushin't like a mussel
Or lampit shell.

Then on the tither hand present her,
A blackguard smuggler right behint her,
An' cheek-for-chow, a chuffie vintner,
Colleaguing join,
Picking her pouch as bare as winter
Of a' kind coin.

Is there, that bears the name o' *Scot*,
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot,
To see his poor auld mither's *pot*
Thus dung in staves,
An' plunder'd o' her hindmost groat
By gallows knaves?

Alas! I'm but a nameless wight,
Trode i' the mire out o' sight!
But could I like *Montgomeries* fight,
Or gab like *Boswell*,
There's some sark-necks I wad draw tight,
An' tie some hose well.

* This was written before the act anent the Scotch distilleries, of session 1786; for which Scotland and the author return their most grateful thanks.

God bless your honours, can ye see't,
The kind, auld, cantie earlin greet,
An' no get warmly to your feet,
An' gar them hear it,
An' tell them wi' a patriot heat,
Ye winna bear it!

Some o' you nicely ken the laws,
To round the period an' pause,
An' wi' rhetoric clause on clause
To mak harangues;
Then echo thro' saint Stephen's wa's
Auld Scotland's wrangs.

Dempster, a true blue Scot I'se warran;
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste *Kilkerran**;
An' that glib-gabbet Highland baron,
The laird o' *Graham*†;
An' ane, a chap that's d-mn'd auldfarran,
Dundas his name.

Erskine, a spunkie Norland billie;
True *Campbells*, *Frederick* an' *Ilay*;
An' *Livingstone*, the bauld *sir Willie*;
An' monie ithers,
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully
Might own for brithers.

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle,
To get auld Scotland back her *kettle*;
Or faith! I'll wad my new pleugh-pettle,
Ye'll see't or lang,
She'll teach you, wi' a reekin whittle,
Anither sang.

This while she's been in crankous mood,
Her *lost militia* fir'd her bluid;
(Deil na they never mair do guid,
Play'd her that pliskie!)
An' now she's like to rin red-wud
About her whisky.

An' L—d, if ance they pit her till't,
Her tartan petitcoat she'll kilt,
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,
She'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt,
I' th' first she meets!

For G-d sake, sirs! then speak her fair,
An' straik her cannie wi' the hair,
An' to the muckle house repair,
Wi' instant speed,
An' strive, wi' a' your wit and lear,
To get remead.

Yon ill-tongu'd tinkler, *Charlie Fox*,
May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks;
But gie him't het, my hearty cocks!
E'en cowe the caddie!
An' send him to his diceing box
An' sportin lady.

Tell yon guid bluid o' auld *Boconnock's*
I'll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,
An' drink his health in auld *Nanse Tinnock's**
Nine times a-week,
If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks,
Wad kindly seek.

Could he some *commutation* broach,
I'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scoteh,
He need na fear their foul reproach
Nor erudition,
Yon mixtie-maxtie queer hotch-potch,
The *Coalition*.

Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue;
She's just a devil wi' a rung;
An' if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Tho' by the neck she should be strung,
She'll no desert.

An' now, ye chosen *five-and-forty*,
May still your mither's heart support ye;
Then, though a minister grow dorty,
An' kick your place,
Ye'll snap your fingers, poor an' hearty,
Before his face.

God bless your honours a' your days,
Wi' sowps o' kail and brats o' claise,
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes,
That haunt St. *Jamie's*!
Your humble poet sings an' prays
While *Rab* his name is.

POSTSCRIPT.

Let half-starv'd slaves in warmer skies
See future wines, rich clust'ring, rise;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But, blythe and frisky,
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys
Tak aff their whisky.

What tho' their Phœbus kinder warms,
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms!
When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,
The scented groves,
Or hounded forth, dishonour arms
In hungry droves.

Their gun's a burden on their shouther;
They downa bide the stink o' powther;
Their bauldest thought's a hank'ring swither
To stan' or rin,
Till skelp—a shot—they're aff, a' throwther,
To save their skin.

But bring a *Scotsman* frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say, such is royal *Georgie's* will,
An' there's the foe,
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.

---

* Sir Adam Ferguson. E.
† The present duke of Montrose. E.

* A worthy old hostess of the author's in *Mauchline*, where he sometimes studies politics over a glass of gude auld *Scotch drink*.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes, wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him;
An' when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin lea'es him
In faint huzzas.

Sages their solemn een may steek,
An' raise a philosophic reek,
An' physically causes seek,
In clime and season;
But tell me *Whisky's* name in Greek,
I'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected mither!
Tho' whiles ye moistify your leather,
Till whare ye sit, on craps o' heather,
Ye tine your dam;
Freedom and *Whisky* gang thegither!
Tak aff your dram!

THE HOLY FAIR*.

A robe of seeming truth and trust
Hid crafty Observation;
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,
The dirk of Defamation:
A mask that like the gorget show'd
Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
He wrapt him in Religion.
Hypocrisy a-la-mode.

I.

Upon a simmer Sunday morn,
When nature's face is fair,
I walked forth to view the corn,
An' snuff the caller air;
The rising sun owre *Galston* muirs,
Wi' glorious light was glintin;
The hares were hirplin down the furs,
The lav'rocks they were chantin
Fu' sweet that day.

II.

As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad,
To see a scene sae gay,
Three hizzies, early at the road,
Came skelpin up the way;
Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black,
But ane wi' lyart lining;
The third, that gaed a-wee a-back,
Was in the fashion shining,
Fu' gay that day.

III.

The *twa* appear'd like sisters twin,
In feature, form, an' claes!
Their visage, wither'd, lang, an' thin,
An' sour as ony slaes:
The *third* cam up, hap-step-an'-lowp,
As light as ony lambie,
An' wi' a curchie low did stoop,
As soon as e'er she saw me,
Fu' kind that day.

IV.

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, "Sweet lass,
I think ye seem to ken me;
I'm sure I've seen that bonnie face,
But yet I canna name ye."
Quo' she, an' laughin as she spak,
An' taks me by the hands,
Ye, for my sake, hae gi'en the feck
Of a' the ten commands
A screed some day.

V.

My name is *Fun*—your cronie dear,
The nearest friend ye hae;
An' this is *Superstition* here,
An' that's *Hypocrisy*.
I'm gaun to ********* *Holy fair*
To spend an hour in daffin:
Gin ye'll go there, yon runkl'd pair,
We will get famous laughin
At them this day."

VI.

Quoth I, "With a' my heart, I'll do't;
I'll get my Sunday's sark on,
An' meet you on the holy spot;
Faith we'se hae fine remarkin!
Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time,
An' soon I made me ready;
For roads were clad, frae side to side,
Wi' monie a wearie body,
In droves that day.

VII.

Here farmers gash, in ridin graith,
Gaed hoddin by their cotters;
There, swankies young, in braw braid-claith,
Are springin o'er the gutters.
The lasses, skelpin barefit, thrang,
In silks an' scarlets glitter;
Wi' *sweet-milk cheese*, in monie a whang,
An' *farls* bak'd wi' butter
Fu' crump that day.

VIII.

When by the *plate* we set our nose,
Weel heaped up wi' ha'pence,
A greedy glowr Black Bonnet throws,
An' we maun draw our tippence.
Then in we go to see the show,
On ev'ry side they're gathrin,
Some carrying dales, some chairs an' stools,
An' some are busy blethrin
Right loud that day.

IX.

Here stands a shed to fend the show'rs,
An' screen our countra gentry,
There, *racer Jess*, an' twa-three wh—rs,
Are blinkin at the entry.
Here sits a raw of tittlin jades,
Wi' heaving breast and bare neck,

* *Holy Fair* is a common phrase in the west of Scotland for a sacramental occasion.

An' there a batch o' wabster lads,
Blackguarding frae K————ck
For *fun* this day.

X.

Here some are thinkin on their sins,
An' some upo' their claes;
Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,
Anither sighs an' prays:
On this hand sits a chosen swatch,
Wi' screw'd-up grace-proud faces;
On that a set o' chaps at watch,
Thrang winkin on the lasses
To chairs that day.

XI.

O happy is that man an' blest!
Nae wonder that it pride him!
Wha's ain dear lass, that he likes best,
Comes clinkin down beside him!
Wi' arm repos'd on the chair back,
He sweetly does compose him;
Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
An's loof upon her bosom
Unkend that day.

XII.

Now a' the congregation o'er
Is silent expectation;
For ****** speels the holy door,
Wi' tidings o' d-mn-t-n.
Should *Hornie*, as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o' G— present him,
The vera sight o' ******'s face,
To's ain het hame had sent him
Wi' fright that day.

XIII.

Hear how he clears the points o' faith
Wi' rattlin an' thumpin!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He's stampin an' he's jumpin!
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeel and gestures,
O how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plasters,
On sic a day!

XIV.

But, hark! the *tent* has chang'd its voice;
There's peace an' rest nae langer:
For a' the *real judges* rise,
They canna sit for anger.
***** opens out his cauld harangues,
On practice and on morals;
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs,
To gie the jars an' barrels
A lift that day.

XV.

What signifies his barren shine,
Of moral pow'rs and reason?
His English style, an' gesture fine,
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like *Socrates* or *Antonine*,
Or some auld pagan heathen,
The moral man he does define,
But ne'er a word o' faith in
That's right that day.

XVI.

In guid time comes an antidote
Against sic poison'd nostrum;
For *******, frae the water-fit,
Ascends the holy rostrum:
See, up he's got the word o' G—,
An' meek an' mim has view'd it,
While *Common-Sense* has ta'en the road,
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate*,
Fast, fast, that day.

XVII.

Wee ******, niest, the guard relieves,
An' orthodoxy raibles,
Tho' in his heart he weel believes,
An' thinks it auld wives' fables:
But, faith the birkie wants a manse,
So, cannily he hums them;
Altho' his carnal wit an' sense
Like hafflins-ways o'ercomes him
At times that day.

XVIII.

Now butt an' ben, the change-house fills,
Wi' yill-caup commentators:
Here's crying out for bakes and gills,
An' there the pint stowp clatters;
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,
Wi' logic, an' wi' scripture,
They raise a din, that, in the end,
Is like to breed a rupture
O' wrath that day.

XIX.

Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair
Than either school or college:
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
Be't whiskey gill, or penny wheep,
Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
To kittle up our notion
By night or day.

XX.

The lads an' lasses, blythely bent
To mind baith saul an' body,
Sit round the table, weel content,
An' steer about the toddy.
On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk,
They're making observations;
While some are cozie i' the neuk,
An' formin assignations
To meet some day.

XXI.

But now the L—d's ain trumpet touts,
Till a' the hills are rairin,
An' echoes back return the shouts:
Black ****** is na spairin:

* A street so called, which faces the *tent*.

His piercing words, like Highlan swords,
Divide the joints an' marrow;
His talk o' h-ll, whare devils dwell,
Our vera sauls does harrow*
Wi' fright that day.

XXII.

A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Fill'd fou o' lowin brunstane,
Wha's ragin flame, an' scorchin heat,
Wad melt the hardest whun-stane!
The half asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin,
When presently it does appear,
'Twas but some neebor snorin
Asleep that day.

XXIII.

'Twad be owre lang a tale, to tell
How monie stories past,
An' how they crouded to the yill,
When they were a' dismist:
How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups,
Amang the furms and benches;
An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps,
Was dealt about in lunches,
An' dawds that day.

XXIV.

In comes a gaucie, gash guidwife,
An' sits down by the fire,
Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife,
The lasses they are shyer.
The auld guidmen, about the *grace*,
Frae side to side they bother,
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,
An' gies them't like a tether,
Fu' lang that day.

XXV.

Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass,
Or lasses that hae naething!
Sma' need has he to say a grace,
Or melvie his braw claithing!
O, wives, be mindfu', ance yoursel,
How bonie lads ye wanted,
An' dinna, for a kebbuck-heel,
Let lasses be affronted
On sic a day!

XXVI.

Now *Clinkumbell*, wi' rattlin tow,
Begins to jow an' croon;
Some swagger home, the best they dow,
Some wait the afternoon.
At slaps the billies halt a blink,
Till lasses strip their shoon:
Wi' faith and hope, an' love an' drink,
They're a' in famous tune
For crack that day.

XXVII.

How monie hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane gin night are gane,
As saft as ony flesh is.
There's some are fou o' love divine;
There's some are fou o' brandy;
An' monie jobs that day begin,
May end in houghmagandie
Some ither day.

* Shakspeare's Hamlet.

DEATH AND DOCTOR HORNBOOK.

A TRUE STORY.

Some books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penn'd:
Ev'n ministers they hae been kenn'd,
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid, at times, to vend,
And nail't wi' scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell,
Which lately on a night befel,
Is just as true's the deil's in h-ll
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel
'S a muckle pity.

The Clachan yill had made me canty,
I was na fou, but just had plenty;
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent aye
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd aye
Frae ghaists an' witches.

The rising moon began to glowr
The distant *Cumnock* hills out-owre:
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel;
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.

I was come round about the hill,
And todlin down on *Willie's mill*,
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill
To keep me sicker;
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker.

I there w' *something* did forgather,
That put me in an eerie swither;
An awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther,
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-tae'd leister on the ither
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava;
And then its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'
As cheeks o' branks.

"Guid-een," quo' I; "friend! hae ye been mawin,
When ither folk are busy sawin*?"
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak;

* This rencounter happened in seed time, 1785.

At length, says I, "Friend, whare ye gaun?
Will ye go back?"

It spak right howe,—"My name is *Death*,
But be na' fley'd."—Quoth I, "Guid faith,
Ye're may be come to stap my breath;
But tent me, billie;
I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith,
See there's a gully!"

"Gudeman," quo' he, "put up your whittle,
I'm no design'd to try its mettle;
But if I did, I wad be kittle
To be mislear'd,
I wad na mind it, no that spittle
Out-owre my beard."

"Weel, weel!" says I, "a bargain be't;
Come, gies your hand, an' sae we're gree't;
We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat,
Come, gies your news;
This while* ye hae been mony a gate
At mony a house."

"Ay, ay!" quo' he, an' shook his head,
"It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed
Sin I began to niek the thread,
An' choke the breath:
Folk maun do something for their bread,
An' sae maun *Death*.

"Sax thousand years are near hand fled
Sin' I was to the butching bred,
An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,
To stap or scar me;
Till ane *Hornbook's*† ta'en up the trade,
An' faith, he'll waur me.

"Ye ken *Jock Hornbook* i' the Clachan,
Deil mak his king's-hood in a spleuchan!
He's grown sae well acquaint wi' *Buchan*‡
An' ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin
And pouk my hips.

"See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart,
They hae piere'd mony a gallant heart;
But doctor *Hornbook*, wi' his art
And cursed skill,
Has made them baith no worth a f—t,
Damn'd haet they'll kill.

"'Twas but yestreen, nae farther gaen,
I threw a noble throw at ane;
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;
But deil-ma-care,
It just play'd dirl on the bane,
But did nae mair.

"*Hornbook* was by, wi' ready art,
And had sae fortify'd the part,
That when I looked to my dart,
It was sae blunt,
Fient haet o't wad hae piere'd the heart
Of a kail-runt.

"I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
I nearhand cowpit wi' my hurry,
But yet the bauld *apothecary*
Withstood the shock;
I might as weel hae try'd a quarry
O' hard whin rock.

"Ev'n them he canna get attended,
Altho' their face he ne'er had kend it,
Just —— in a kail-blade, and send it,
As soon as he smells't,
Baith their disease, and what will mend it,
At once he tells't.

"And then a doctor's saws and whittles,
Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
He's sure to hae;
Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A B C.

"Calces o' fossils, earth, and trees;
True sal-marinum o' the seas;
The farina of beans and pease,
He has't in plenty;
Aqua-fontis, what you please,
He can content ye.

"Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,
Urinus spiritus of capons;
Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
Distill'd *per se*;
Sal-alkali o' midge-tail-clippings,
And mony mae."

"Waes me for *Johnny Ged's Hole** now,"
Quo' I, "if that the news be true!
His braw calf-ward whare gowans grew,
Sae white and bonie,
Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plew;
They'll ruin *Johnie!*"

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh,
And says, "Ye need na yoke the pleugh,
Kirkyards will soon be till'd eneugh,
Tak ye nae fear:
They'll a' be treneh'd wi' mony a sheugh
In twa-three year.

"Whare I kill'd ane a fair strae death,
By loss o' blood or want of breath,
This night, I'm free to tak my aith,
That *Hornbook's* skill
Has clad a score i' their last claith,
By drap an' pill.

"An honest wabster to his trade,
Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel bred,

---

* An epidemical fever was then raging in that country.

† This gentleman, Dr. *Hornbook*, is, professionally, a brother of the sovereign order of the Ferula; but, by intuition and inspiration, is, at once, an apothecary, surgeon, and physician.

‡ Buchan's Domestic Medicine.

* The grave-digger.

Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair;
The wife slade cannie to her bed,
But ne'er spak mair.

"A countra laird had ta'en the batts,
Or some curmurring in his guts,
His only son for *Hornbook* sets,
An' pays him well.
The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets,
Was laird himsel.

"A bonie lass, ye kend her name,
Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame;
She trusts hersel, to hide the shame,
In *Hornbook's* care;
Horn sent her aff to her long hame,
To hide it there.

"That's just a swatch o' *Hornbook's* way;
Thus goes he on from day to day,
Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay,
An's weel paid for't;
Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
Wi' his d-mn'd dirt:

But, hark! I'll tell you of a plot,
Tho' dinna ye be speaking o't;
I'll nail the self-conceited sot,
As dead's a herrin:
Niest time we meet, I'll wad a groat,
He gets his fairin!"

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell
Some wee short hour ayont the *twal*,
Which rais'd us baith:
I took the way that pleas'd mysel,
And sae did *Death*.

THE BRIGS OF AYR.

A POEM.

Inscribed to J. B*********, Esq. Ayr.

The simple bard, rough at the rustic plough,
Learning his tuneful trade from every bough;
The chanting linnet, or the mellow thrush,
Hailing the setting sun, sweet, in the green thorn bush;
The soaring lark, the perching red-breast shrill,
Or deep-ton'd plovers, grey, wild-whistling o'er the hill;
Shall he, nurst in the peasant's lowly shed,
To hardy independence bravely bred,
By early poverty to hardship steel'd,
And train'd to arms in stern Misfortune's field,
Shall he be guilty of their hireling crimes,
The servile, mercenary Swiss of rhymes?
Or labour hard the panegyric close,
With all the venal soul of dedicating prose?
No! though his artless strains he rudely sings,
And throws his hand uncouthly o'er the strings,
He glows with all the spirit of the bard,
Fame, honest fame, his great, his dear reward.
Still, if some patron's gen'rous care he trace,
Skill'd in the secret to bestow with grace;
When B********* befriends his humble name,
And hands the rustic stranger up to fame,
With heartfelt throes his grateful bosom swells,
The godlike bliss, to give, alone excels.

. . . . . .

'Twas when the stacks get on their winter-hap,
And thack and rape secure the toil-worn crap;
Potatoe-bings are snugged up fra skaith
Of coming winter's biting, frosty breath;
The bees, rejoicing o'er their summer toils,
Unnumber'd buds an' flow'rs' delicious spoils,
Seal'd up with frugal care in massive waxen piles,
Are doom'd by man, that tyrant o'er the weak,
The death o' devils, smoor'd wi' brimstone reek:
The thundering guns are heard on ev'ry side,
The wounded coveys, reeling, scatter wide;
The feather'd field-mates, bound by nature's tie,
Sires, mothers, children, in one carnage lie:
(What warm, poetic heart but inly bleeds,
And execrates man's savage, ruthless deeds!)
Nae mair the flow'r in field or meadow springs;
Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,
Except perhaps the robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree:
The hoary morns precede the sunny days,
Mild, calm, serene, wide-spreads the noon-tide blaze,
While thick the gossamour waves wanton in the rays.
'Twas in that season, when a simple bard,
Unknown and poor, simplicity's reward,
Ae night, within the ancient brugh of *Ayr*,
By whom inspir'd, or haply prest wi' care,
He left his bed, and took his wayward rout,
And down by *Simpson's** wheel'd the left about:
(Whether impell'd by all-directing fate,
To witness what I after shall narrate;
Or whether, rapt in meditation high,
He wander'd out he knew not where nor why.)
The drowsy *Dungeon-clock*† had number'd two,
And *Wallace Tow'r*† had sworn the fact was true;
The tide-swoln Firth, with sullen sounding roar,
Through the still night dash'd hoarse along the shore:
All else was hush'd as nature's closed e'e;
The silent moon shone high o'er tow'r and tree:
The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,
Crept gently-crusting, o'er the glittering stream.—
When, lo! on either hand the list'ning bard,
The clanging sugh of whistling wings is heard;
Two dusky forms dart thro' the midnight air,
Swift as the *gos*‡ drives on the wheeling hare;
Anc on th' *Auld Brig* his airy shape uprears,
The ither flutters o'er the *rising piers*;
Our warlock rhymer instantly descry'd
The sprites that owre the *Brigs of Ayr* preside.
(That bards are second-sighted is nae joke,
And ken the lingo of the sp'ritual folk;

* A noted tavern at the *Auld Brig* end.
† The two steeples.
‡ The gos-hawk, or falcon.

Fays, spunkies, kelpies, a', they can explain them,
And ev'n the vera deils they brawly ken them.)
Auld Brig appear'd of ancient Pictish race,
The very wrinkles Gothic in his face:
He seem'd as he wi' Time had warstl'd lang,
Yet teughly doure, he bade an unco bang.
New Brig was buskit in a braw new coat,
That he, at *Lon'on*, frae ane *Adams*, got;
In's hand five taper staves as smooth's a bead,
Wi' virls and whirlygigums at the head.
The Goth was stalking round with anxious search,
Spying the time-worn flaws in ev'ry arch;
It chanc'd his new-come neebor took his e'e,
And e'en a vex'd and angry heart had he!
Wi' thieveless sneer to see his modish mein,
He, down the water, gies him this guideen—

AULD BRIG.

I doubt na, frien', ye'll think y'ere nae sheep shank,
Ance ye were streekit o'er frae bank to bank!
But gin ye be a brig as auld as me,
Tho' faith that day I doubt ye'll never see;
There'll be, if that date come, I'll wad a boddle,
Some fewer whigmeleeries in your noddle.

NEW BRIG.

Auld Vandal, ye but show your little mense,
Just much about it wi' your scanty sense;
Will your poor, narrow foot-path of a street,
Where twa wheel-barrows tremble when they meet,
Your ruin'd, formless bulk, o' stane an' lime,
Compare wi' bonie *Brigs* o' modern time?
There's men o' taste wou'd tak the *Ducat-stream**,
Tho' they should cast the vera sark and swim,
E'er they would grate their feelings wi' the view
Of sic an ugly, Gothic hulk as you.

AULD BRIG.

Conceited gowk! puff'd up wi' windy pride!
This mony a year I've stood the flood an' tide;
And tho' wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn,
I'll be a *Brig*, when ye're a shapeless cairn!
As yet ye little ken about the matter,
But twa-three winters will inform ye better.
When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains,
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling *Coil*,
Or stately *Lugar's* mossy fountains boil,
Or where the *Greenock* winds his moorland course,
Or haunted *Garpal*† draws his feeble source,
Arous'd by blust'ring winds an' spotting thowes,
In mony a torrent down his sna-broo rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat,
Sweep dams, an' mills, an' brigs, a' to the gate;
And from *Glenbuck**, down to the *Ratton-key*†,
Auld *Ayr* is just one lengthen'd, tumbling sea;
Then down ye'll hurl, deil nor ye never rise!
And dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies.
A lesson sadly teaching, to your cost,
That architecture's noble art is lost!

NEW BRIG.

Fine *architecture*, trowth, I needs must say't o't!
The L—d be thankit that we've tint the gate o't!
Gaunt, ghastly, ghaist-alluring edifices,
Hanging with threat'ning jut, like precipices;
O'er arching, mouldy, gloom-inspiring coves,
Supporting roofs fantastic, stony groves:
Windows and doors, in nameless sculpture drest,
With order, symmetry, or taste unblest;
Forms like some bedlam statuary's dream,
The craz'd creations of misguided whim;
Forms might be worshipp'd on the bended knee,
And still the *second dread command* be free,
Their likeness is not found on earth, in air, or sea;
Mansions that would disgrace the building taste
Of any mason reptile, bird or beast;
Fit only for a doited monkish race,
Or frosty maids forsworn the dear embrace,
Or cuifs of latter times, wha held the notion
That sullen gloom was sterling true devotion;
Fancies that our guid brugh denies protection!
And soon may they expire, unblest with resurrection!

AULD BRIG.

O ye, my dear-remember'd, ancient yealings,
Were ye but here to share my wounded feelings!
Ye worthy *proveses*, an' mony a *bailie*,
Wha in the paths of righteousness did toil aye;
Ye dainty *deacons*, an' ye douee *conveeners*,
To whom our moderns are but causey-cleaners;
Ye godly *councils* wha hae blest this town;
Ye godly *brethren* of the sacred gown,
Wha meekly gie your *hurdies* to the *smiters*;
And (what would now be strange) ye *godly writers*:
A' ye douce folk I've borne aboon the broo,
Were ye but here, what would ye say or do!
How would your spirits groan in deep vexation,
To see each melancholy alteration;
And agonizing, curse the time and place
When ye begat the base, degen'rate race!
Na langer rev'rend men, their country's glory,
In plain braid Scots hold forth a plain braid story!
Nae langer thrifty citizens, an' douee,
Meet owre a pint, or in the Council-house;
But staumrel, corky-headed, graceless gentry,
The herryment and ruin of the country;
Men, three-parts made by taylors and by barbers,
Wha waste your weel-hain'd gear on d—d *new Brigs* and *Harbours!*

NEW BRIG.

Now haud you there! for faith ye've said enough,
And muckle mair than ye can mak to through,

* A noted ford, just above the Auld Brig.

† The banks of *Garpal Water* is one of the few places in the west of Scotland, where those fancy scaring beings, known by the name of *ghaists*, still continue pertinaciously to inhabit.

* The source of the river Ayr.

‡ A small landing place above the large key.

As for your priesthood, I shall say but little,
Corbies and *clergy* are a shot right kittle;
But, under favour o' your langer beard,
Abuse o' magistrates might weel be spar'd:
To liken them to your auld-warld squad,
I must needs say, comparisons are odd.
In *Ayr*, wag-wits nae mair can hae a handle
To mouth "a citizen," a term o' scandal:
Nae mair the council waddles down the street,
In all the pomp of ignorant conceit;
Men wha grow wise priggin owre hops an' raisins,
Or gather'd lib'ral views in bonds and seisins.
If, haply, Knowledge, on a random tramp,
Had shor'd them with a glimmer of his lamp,
And would to Common-sense for once betray'd them,
Plain, dull Stupidity stept kindly in to aid them.

. . . . . .

What farther clishmaclaver might been said,
What bloody wars, if sprites had blood to shed,
No man can tell; but all before their sight,
A fairy train appear'd in order bright:
Adown the glittering stream they featly danc'd;
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanc'd:
They footed o'er the wat'ry glass so neat,
The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet;
While arts of minstrelsy among them rung,
And soul-ennobling bards heroic ditties sung.
O had *M'Lauchlan**, thairm-inspiring sage,
Been there to hear this heavenly band engage,
When thro' his dear *strathspeys* they bore
with Highland rage:
Or when they struck old Scotia's melting airs,
The lover's raptur'd joys or bleeding cares;
How would his Highland lug been nobler fir'd,
And ev'n his matchless hand with finer touch inspir'd!
No guess could tell what instrument appear'd,
But all the soul of music's self was heard;
Harmonious concert rung in every part,
While simple melody pour'd moving on the heart.
The genius of the stream in front appears,
A venerable chief advanc'd in years;
His hoary head with water-lilies crown'd,
His manly leg with garter tangle bound.
Next came the loveliest pair in all the ring,
Sweet Female Beauty hand in hand with Spring;
Then, crown'd with flow'ry hay, came Rural Joy,
And Summer, with his fervid-beaming eye:
All-cheering Plenty, with her flowing horn,
Led yellow Autumn wreath'd with nodding corn;
Then Winter's time-bleach'd locks did hoary show,
By Hospitality with cloudless brow.
Next follow'd Courage with his martial stride,
From where the *Feal* wild woody coverts hide;
Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,
A female form, came from the tow'rs of *Stair*:
Learning and Worth in equal measures trode
From simple *Catrine*, their long-lov'd abode:
Last, white-rob'd Peace, crown'd with a hazle wreath,
To rustic Agriculture did bequeath
The broken iron instruments of death;
At sight of whom our sprites forgot their kindling wrath.

* A well known performer of Scottish music on the violin.

THE ORDINATION.

For sense they little owe to frugal heav'n—
To please the mob they hide the little given.

I.

Kilmarnock wabsters, fidge an' claw,
An' pour your creeshie nations;
An' ye wha leather rax an' draw,
Of a' denominations;
Swith to the *Laigh kirk*, ane an' a',
An' there tak up your stations;
Then aff to *B-gb-'s* in a raw,
An' pour divine libations
For joy this day.

II.

Curst Common-sense, that imp o' h-ll,
Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder*;
But O******* aft made her yell,
An' R***** sair misca'd her;
This day M'******* takes the flail,
And he's the boy will blaud her!
He'll clap a *shangan* on her tail,
An' set the bairns to daub her
Wi' dirt this day.

III.

Mak haste an' turn king David owre,
An' lilt wi' holy clangour;
O' double verse come gie us four,
An' skirl up the Bangor:
This day the kirk kicks up a stoure,
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her
For heresy is in her pow'r,
And gloriously she'll whang her
Wi' pith this day.

IV.

Come, let a proper text be read,
An' touch it aff wi' vigour,
How graceless *Ham*† leugh at his dad,
Which made *Canaan* a niger;
Or *Phinehas*‡ drove the murdering blade,
Wi' wh-re-abhorring rigour;
Or *Zipporah*§, the scauldin jad,
Was like a bluidy tiger
I' th' inn that day.

V.

There, try his mettle on the creed,
And bind him down wi' caution,
That *stipend* is a carnal weed
He taks but for the fashion;
And gie him o'er the flock, to feed,
And punish each transgression;
Especial, *rams* that cross the breed,
Gie them sufficient threshin,
Spare them nae day.

* Alluding to a scoffing ballad which was made on the admission of the late reverend and worthy Mr. L. to the Laigh kirk.

† Genesis, ch. ix. ver. 22.

‡ Numbers, ch. xxv. ver. 8.

§ Exodus, ch. iv. ver. 25.

VI.

Now, auld *Kilmarnock*, cock thy tail,
And toss thy horns fu' canty;
Nae mair thou'lt rowte out-owre the dale,
Because thy pasture's scanty;
For lapfu's large o' *gospel kail*
Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
An' *runts* o' *grace* the pick and wale,
No gi'en by way o' dainty,
But ilka day.

VII.

Na mair by *Babel's streams* we'll weep,
To think upon our *Zion;*
And hing our fiddles up to sleep,
Like baby-clouts a-dryin:
Come, screw the pegs wi' tunefu' cheep,
And o'er the thairms be tryin;
O, rare! to see our elbucks wheep,
An' a' like lamb-tails flyin
Fu' fast this day!

VIII.

Lang *Patronage*, wi' rod o' airn,
Has shor'd the kirk's undoin,
As lately *F-nw-ck*, sair forfairn,
Has proven to its ruin:
Our patron, honest man! *Glencairn*,
He saw mischief was brewin;
And like a godly elect bairn,
He's wal'd us out a true ane,
And sound this day.

IX.

Now, R******, harangue nae mair,
But steek your gab for ever:
Or try the wicked town of A**,
For there they'll think you clever;
Or, nae reflection on your lear,
Ye may commence a shaver;
Or to the *N-th-rt-n* repair,
And turn a carpet-weaver
Aff-hand this day.

X.

M***** and you were just a match,
We never had sic twa drones:
Auld *Hornie* did the *Laigh kirk* watch,
Just like a winkin baudrons:
And aye he catch'd the tither wretch,
To fry them in his caudrons:
But now his honour maun detach,
Wi' a' his brimstone squadrons,
Fast, fast this day.

XI.

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes
She's swingein thro' the city;
Hark, how the nine-tail'd cat she plays!
I vow its unco pretty:
There, Learning, with his Greekish face,
Grunts out some Latin ditty;
And Common Sense is gaun, she says,
To mak to *Jamie Beattie*
Her plaint this day.

XII.

But there's Morality himsel,
Embracing all opinions;
Hear, how he gies the tither yell,
Between his twa companions;
See, how she peels the skin an' fell,
As ane were peelin onions!
Now there—they're packed aff to hell,
And banish'd our dominions,
Henceforth this day.

XIII.

O happy day! rejoice, rejoice!
Come bouse about the porter!
Morality's demure decoys
Shall here nae mair find quarter:
M******, R*****, are the boys,
That Heresy can torture;
They'll gie her on a rape a hoyse,
And cow her measure shorter
By th' head some day.

XIV.

Come, bring the tither mutchkin in,
And here's, for a conclusion,
To every *new light** mother's son,
From this time forth, confusion:
If mair they deave us with their din,
Or patronage intrusion,
We'll light a spunk, and, ev'ry skin,
We'll rin them aff in fusion
Like oil, some day.

THE CALF.

TO THE REV. Mr. ——,

On his text, Malachi, ch. iv. ver. 2. "And they shall go forth, and grow up, like *calves* of the stall."

Right, sir, your text I'll prove it true,
Though heretics may laugh;
For instance; there's yoursel just now,
God knows, an unco *calf!*

And should some patron be so kind
As bless you wi' a kirk,
I doubt na, sir, but then we'll find
Ye're still as great a *stirk.*

But, if the lover's raptur'd hour
Shall ever be your lot,
Forbid it, ev'ry heavenly power,
You e'er should be a *stot!*

Tho', when some kind, connubial *dear*,
Your but-and-ben adorns,
The like has been, that you may wear
A noble head of *horns.*

* *New-light* is a cant phrase, in the west of Scotland, for those religious opinions which Dr. Taylor of Norwich has defended so strenuously.

And in your lug, most reverend *James*,
To hear you roar and rowte,
Few men o' sense will doubt your claims
To rank amang the *nowte*.

And when ye're number'd wi' the dead,
Below a grassy hillock,
Wi' justice they may mark your head—
"Here lies a famous *bullock!*"

ADDRESS

TO THE DEIL.

Oh prince! Oh chief of many throned pow'rs,
That led the embattl'd seraphim to war—.
Milton.

O thou! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Clos'd under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,
To scaud poor wretches!

Hear me, auld *Hangie*, for a wee,
An' let poor damned bodies be;
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'n to a *deil*,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An hear us squeel!

Great is thy pow'r, an' great thy fame;
Far kend and noted is thy name;
An' tho' yon lowin heugh's thy hame,
Thou travels far;
An, faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scaur.

Whyles ranging like a roarin lion,
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin;
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin,
Tirling the kirks;
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin,
Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my reverend *graunie* say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray,
Or where auld-ruin'd castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way,
Wi' eldritch croon.

When twilight did my *graunie* summon,
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin,
Wi' eerie drone;
Or, ruslin, thro' the boortries comin,
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin light,
Wi' you, mysel, I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-buss, stood in sight,
Wi' waving sugh.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch stour, quaick—quaick—
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd like a drake,
On whistling wings.

Let *warlocks* grim, an' wither'd *hags*,
Tell how wi' you on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs, an' dizzy crags,
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues,
Owre howkit dead.

Thence countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain;
For, oh! the yellow treasure's taen
By witching skill;
An' dawtit, twal-pint *hawkie*'s gaen
As yell's the bill.

Thence mystic knots mak great abuse,
On young guidmen, fond, keen, an' crouse;
When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantrip wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord,
An' float the jinglin icy-boord,
Then *water-kelpies* haunt the foord,
By your direction,
An' nighted trav'llers are allur'd
To their destruction.

An' aft your moss-traversing *spunkies*
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is:
The bleezin, curst, mischievous monkies
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When *masons'* mystic *word* an' *grip*,
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest brother ye wad whip
Aff straught to hell!

Lang syne, in *Eden's* bonie yard,
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
An' all the soul of love they shar'd,
The raptur'd hour,
Sweet on the fragrant, flow'ry sward,
In shady bow'r:

Then you, ye auld, snic-drawing dog!
Ye came to Paradise incog.,
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,
(Black be your fa!)
An' gied the infant warld a shod,
'Maist ruin'd a'.

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz,
Wi' reekit duds, an' reestit gizz,
Ye did present your smoutie phiz,
'Mang better folk,
An' sklented on the *man of Uz*
Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hall,
While scabs an' botches did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw,
An' lows'd his ill-tongu'd, wicked scawl,
Was warst ava?

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fechtin fierce,
Sin' that day *Michael** did you pierce,
Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse,
In prose or rhyme.

An' now, auld *Cloots*, I ken ye're thinkin,
A certain bardie's rantin, drinkin,
Some luckless hour will send him linkin
To your black pit;
But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin,
An' cheat you yet.

But, fare you weel, auld *Nickie-ben!*
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
Still hae a *stake*—
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Ev'n for your sake!

THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS

OF POOR MAILIE,

THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE.

An unco mournfu' tale.

As *Mailie*, an' her lambs thegither,
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch,
An' owre she warsl'd in the ditch:
There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When *Hughoc** he cam doytin by.
Wi' glowrin een, an' lifted han's,
Poor *Hughoc* like a statue stan's;
He saw her days were near hand ended,
But, waes my heart! he could na mend it!
He gaped wide, but naething spak;
At length poor *Mailie* silence brak.
"O, thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!
My *dying words* attentive hear,
An' bear them to my master dear.
"Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep,
O, bid him never tie them mair
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!
But ca' them out to park or hill,
An' let them wander at their will;
So may his flock increase, an' grow
To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo!
"Tell him, he was a master kin',
An' aye was guid to me and mine;
An' now my dying charge I gie him,
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.
"O, bid him save their harmless lives,
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butchers' knives!
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel;
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn,
Wi' teats o' hay an' rips o' corn.
"An' may they never learn the gaets
Of ither vile, wanrestfu' *pets!*
To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal,
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail.
So may they, like their great forbears,
For monie a year come thro' the sheers:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.
"My poor *toop-lamb*, my son an' heir,
O, bid him breed him up wi' care!
An', if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast!
An' warn him, what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame;
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,
Like ither mensless, graceless brutes.
"An' niest my *yowie*, silly thing,
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
O, may thou ne'er forgather up
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop;
But aye keep mind to moop an' mell,
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel!
"And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath,
I lea'e my blessin wi' you baith:
An' when you think upo' your mither,
Mind to be kin' to ane anither.
"Now, honest *Hughoc*, dinna fail
To tell my master a' my tale;
An' bid him burn this cursed tether,
An', for thy pains, thou'se get my blether."
This said, poor *Mailie* turn'd her head,
An' clos'd her een amang the dead."

POOR MAILIE'S

ELEGY.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose;
Our bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead;
The last sad cape-stane of his woes;
Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear
The mourning weed:
He's lost a friend and neebor dear,
In *Mailie* dead.

Thro' a' the toun she trotted by him;
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him,
Than *Mailie* dead.

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* Vide *Milton*, book vi.
+ A neibor herd-callan.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
An' could behave hersel wi' mense:
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence
Sin' *Mailie*'s dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,
Her living image, in her *yowe*,
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe,
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe
For *Mailie* dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips,
Wi' tawted ket, an' hairy hips;
For her forbears were brought in ships
Frae yont the *Tweed*;
A bonier *fleesh* ne'er cross'd the clips
Than *Mailie*'s dead.

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing—*a rape!*
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,
Wi' chokin dread;
An' *Robin*'s bonnet wave wi' crape,
For *Mailie* dead.

O, a' ye bards on bonie *Doon!*
An' wha on *Ayr* your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon
O' *Robin*'s reed!
His heart will never get aboon!
His *Mailie* dead.

TO J. S****.

Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of life, and solder of society!
I owe thee much.——
Blair.

Dear S****, the sleest, paukie thief,
That e'er attempted stealth or rief,
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef
Owre human hearts;
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief
Against your arts.

For me, I swear by sun an' moon,
And ev'ry star that blinks aboon,
Ye've cost me twenty pair o' shoon
Just gaun to see you;
And ev'ry ither pair that's done,
Mair taen I'm wi' you.

That auld capricious carlin, nature,
To mak amends for scrimpit stature,
She's turn'd you off, a human creature
On her *first* plan,
And in her freaks, on ev'ry feature,
She's wrote, *the man.*

Just now I've taen the fit o' rhyme,
My barmie noddle's working prime,
My fancy yerkit up sublime
Wi' hasty summon:
Hae ye a leisure-moment's time
To hear what's comin?

Some rhyme a neebor's name to lash;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,
An' raise a din;
For me, an *aim* I never fash;
I rhyme for fun.

The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
An' damn'd my fortune to the groat;
But in requit,
Has blest me wi' a random shot
O' countra wit.

This while my notion's taen a sklent,
To try my fate in guid, black *prent;*
But still the mair I'm that way bent,
Something cries, "Hoolie!
I red you, honest man, tak tent!
Ye'll shaw your folly.

"There's ither poets, much your betters,
Far seen in *Greek*, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had ensur'd their debtors,
A' future ages;
Now moths deform in shapeless tetters,
Their unknown pages."

Then farewel hopes o' laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistling thrang,
An' teach the lanely heights an' howes
My rustic sang.

I'll wander on, with tentless heed,
How never-halting moments speed,
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I'll lay me with th' inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we're living sound and hale,
Then top and maintop croud the sail,
Heave *care* o'er side!
And large, before enjoyment's gale,
Let's tak the tide.

This life, sae far's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy land,
Where pleasure is the magic wand,
That, wielded right,
Maks hours like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light.

The magic-wand then let us wield;
For, ance that five-an'-forty's speel'd,
See crazy, weary, joyless eild,
Wi' wrinkl'd face,
Comes hostin, hirplin owre the field,
Wi' creepin pace.

When anee *life's day* draws near the gloamin,
Then fareweel vacant careless roamin;
An' fareweel chearfu' tankards foamin,
An' social noise;
An' fareweel dear, deluding *woman*,
The joy of joys!

O life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold-pausing caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys, at th' expected warning,
To join and play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Among the leaves;
And tho' the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.

Some, lucky, find a flow'ry spot,
For which they never toil'd nor swat;
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,
But care or pain;
And, haply, eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim, some fortune chase;
Keen hope does ev'ry sinew brace;
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,
And seize the prey:
Then canie, in some cozie place,
They close the *day*.

And others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin;
To right or left, eternal swervin,
They zig-zag on;
'Till curst with age, obscure an' starvin,
They aften groan.

Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—
But truce with peevish, poor complaining!
Is fortune's fickle *Luna* waning?
E'en let her gang!
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, "ye pow'rs!" and warm implore,
"Tho' I should wander *terra* o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Aye rowth o' rhymes.

"Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds,
Till icicles hing frae their beards;
Gie fine braw clacs to fine life-guards,
And maids of honour;
And yill an' whisky gie to cairds,
Until they sconner.

"A title, *Dempster* merits it;
A *garter* gie to *Willie Pitt*;
Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
In cent. per cent.
But give me real, sterling wit.
And I'm content.

"While ye are pleas'd to keep me hale,
I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be't *water-brose*, or *muslin-kail*,
Wi' chearfu' face,
As lang's the muses dinna fail
To say the grace."

An anxious e'e I never throws
Behint my lug, or by my nose;
I jouk beneath misfortune's blows
As weel's I may;
Sworn foe to sorrow, care, and prose,
I rhyme away.

O ye douce folk, that live by rule,
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike!
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke!

Nae hair-brain'd sentimental traces
In your unletter'd, nameless faces!
In *arioso* trills and graces
Ye never stray,
But *gravissimo*, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

Ye are sae *grave*, nae doubt ye're *wise*;
Nae ferly tho' ye do despise
The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys,
The rattlin squad:
I see you upward cast your eyes—
—Ye ken the road.—

Whilst I—but I shall haud me there—
Wi' you I'll scarce gang *ony where*—
Then, *Jamie*, I shall say nae mair,
But quat my sang,
Content wi' *you* to mak a pair,
Whare'er I gang.

A DREAM.

Thoughts, words, and deeds, the statute blames with reason;
But surely dreams *were ne'er indicted treason.*

[On reading, in the public papers, the *Laureat's ode*, with the other parade of June 4, 1786, the author was no sooner dropt asleep, than he imagined himself transported to the birth-day levee: and in his dreaming fancy, made the following *Address*.]

I.

Guid-mornin to your *majesty!*
May heaven augment your blisses,
On ev'ry new *birth-day* ye see,
A humble poet wishes!
My bardship here, at your levee,
On sic a day as this is,
Is sure an uncouth sight to see,
Amang the birth-day dresses
Sae fine this day,

II.

I see ye're complimented thrang,
By mony a lord and lady;
"God save the king!" 's a cuckoo sang
That's unco easy said aye;
The *poets*, too, a venal gang,
Wi' rhymes weel-turn'd and ready,
Wad gar you trow ye ne'er do wrang,
But aye unerring steady,
On sic a day.

III.

For me! before a monarch's face,
Ev'n *there* I winna flatter;
For neither pension, post, nor place,
Am I your humble debtor:
So, nae reflection on *your grace*,
Your kingship to bespatter;
There's monie waur been o' the race,
And aiblins ane been better
Than you this day.

IV.

'Tis very true, my sov'reign king,
My skill may weel be doubted:
But facts are cheels that winna ding,
An' downa be disputed:
Your royal nest, beneath your wing,
Is e'en right reft an' clouted,
And now the third part of the string,
An' less, will gang about it
Than did ae day.

V.

Far be't frae me that I aspire
To blame your legislation,
Or say, ye wisdom want, or fire,
To rule this mighty nation!
But, faith! I muckle doubt, my *sire*,
Ye've trusted ministration
To chaps, wha, in a barn or byre,
Wad better fill'd their station
Than courts yon day.

VI.

And now ye've gien auld *Britain* peace,
Her broken shins to plaister;
Your sair taxation does her fleece,
Till she has scarce a tester;
For me, thank God, my life's a *lease*,
Nae *bargain* wearing faster,
Or, faith! I fear, that, wi' the geese,
I shortly boost to pasture
I' the craft some day.

VII.

I'm no mistrusting *Willie Pitt*,
When taxes he enlarges,
(An' *Will*'s a true guid fallow's get,
A name not envy spairges,)
That he intends to pay your debt,
An' lessen a' your charges;
But G–d–sake! let nae *saving-fit*
Abridge your bonie barges
An' boats this day.

VIII.

Adieu, my *liege!* may freedom geek
Beneath your high protection;
An' may ye rax corruption's neck,
And gie her for dissection!
But since I'm here, I'll no neglect,
In loyal, true affection,
To pay your *queen*, with due respect,
My fealty an' subjection
This great birth-day.

IX.

Hail, *majesty most excellent!*
While nobles strive to please ye,
Will ye accept a compliment
A simple poet gies ye?
Thae bonie bairntime, heav'n has lent,
Still higher may they heeze ye
In bliss, till fate some day is sent,
For ever to release ye
Frae care that day.

X.

For you, young potentate o' W——,
I tell your *highness* fairly,
Down pleasure's stream, wi' swelling sails,
I'm tauld ye're driving rarely;
But some day ye may gnaw your nails,
An' curse your folly sairly,
That e'er ye brak *Diana*'s pales,
Or rattl'd dice wi' *Charlie*,
By night or day.

XI.

Yet aft a ragged *cowte*'s been known
To mak a noble *aiver*;
So ye may doucely fill a throne,
For a' their clish-ma-claver:
There, him* at *Agincourt* wha shone,
Few better were, or braver;
And yet, wi' funny, queer *sir John*†,
He was an unco shaver
For monie a day.

XII.

For you right rev'rend O——,
Nane sets the *lawn-sleeve* sweeter,
Altho' a ribban at your lug
Wad been a dress completer:
As ye disown yon paughty dog
That bears the keys of Peter,
Then, swith! an' get a wife to hug,
Or, trouth! ye'll stain the mitre
Some luckless day.

XIII.

Young, royal *Tarry Breeks*, I learn,
Ye've lately come athwart her;
A glorious *galley*‡, stem an' stern,
Weel rigg'd for *Venus*' barter;

---

* King Henry V.

† Sir John Falstaff, *vide* Shakspeare.

‡ Alluding to the news-paper account of a certain royal sailor's amour.

But first hang out, that she'll discern,
Your hymeneal charter,
Then heave aboard your grapple airn,
An' large upo' her quarter,
Come full that day.

XIV.

Ye, lastly, bonie blossoms a',
Ye royal lasses dainty,
Heav'n mak you guid as weel as braw,
An' gie you lads a-plenty:
But sneer na *British boys* awa',
For kings are unco scant aye;
An' German gentles are but *sma'*,
They're better just than *want aye*
On onie day.

XV.

God bless you a'! consider now,
Your unco muckle dautet;
But ere the *course* o' life be through,
It may be bitter sautet:
An' I hae seen their *coggie* fou,
That yet hae tarrow't at it;
But or the *day* was done, I trow,
The laggen they hae clautet
Fu' clean that day.

THE VISION.

DUAN FIRST*.

The sun had clos'd the winter day,
The curlers quat their roaring play,
An' hunger'd maukin taen her way
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary *flingin-tree*
The lee-lang day had tired me;
And whan the day had clos'd his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the *spence*, right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek,
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek,
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking smeek,
The auld clay biggin;
An' heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin.

All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mus'd on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done nae-thing,
But stringin blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank an' clarkit
My cash-account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
Is a' th' amount.

I started, mutt'ring, blockhead! coof!
And heav'd on high my waukit loof,
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I, henceforth, would be *rhyme-proof*
Till my last breath—

When click! the string the snick did draw;
And jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin bright,
A tight, outlandish *hizzie*, braw,
Come full in sight.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht;
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht;
I glowr'd as eerie's I'd been dusht
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like modest worth, she blusht,
And stepped ben.

Green, slender, leaf-clad *holly-boughs*
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows;
I took her for some *Scottish muse*,
By that same token;
An' come to stop those reckless vows,
Wou'd soon been broken.

A "hair-brain'd, sentimental trace"
Was strongly marked in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honour.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
'Till half a leg was scrimply seen;
And such a leg! my bonie *Jean*
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight, and clean,
Nane else came near it.

Her *mantle* large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep *lights* and *shades*, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand;
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A *well known* land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were tost:
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
With surging foam;
There, distant shone art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here, *Doon* pour'd down his far-fetched floods;
There, well-fed *Irvine* stately thuds:
Auld hermit *Ayr* staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

* *Duan*, a term of Ossian's for the different divisions of a digressive poem. See his *Cath-Loda*, vol. ii. of M'Pherson's translation.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient *borough* rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race,
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

By stately tow'r or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race* heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dy'd steel
In sturdy blows;
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel
Their suthron foes.

His *country's saviour*†, mark him well!
Bold *Richardton's*‡ heroic swell;
The chief on *Sark*§ who glorious fell,
In high command;
And *he* whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptr'd *Pictish* shade‖
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race, pourtray'd
In colours strong;
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd
They strode along.

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove¶,
Near many a hermit-fancy'd cove,
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love,
In musing mood,)
An *aged judge*, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck reverential awe**
The learned *sire* and *son* I saw,
To nature's God and nature's law
They gave their lore,
This, all its source and end to draw,
That, to adore.

Brydone's brave ward* I well could spy,
Beneath old *Scotia*'s smiling eye;
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot-name on high
And hero shone.

DUAN SECOND.

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heav'nly-seeming *fair*;
A whisp'ring throb did witness bear
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

"All hail! my own inspired bard!
In me thy native muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low!
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

"Know the great *genius* of this land
Has many a light, aerial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

"They *Scotia*'s race among them share;
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart:
Some teach the bard, a darling care,
The tuneful art.

"'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They ardent, kindling spirits pour;
Or, mid the venal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the hand.

"And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild, poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

"Hence *Fullarton*, the brave and young;
Hence *Dempster's* zeal-inspired tongue;
Hence sweet harmonious *Beattie* sung
His "Minstrel lays;"
Or tore, with noble ardour stung,
The *sceptic's* bays.

"To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human-kind,
The rustic bard, the lab'ring hind,
The artisan;

---

* The Wallaces. † William Wallace.

‡ Adam Wallace, of Richardton, cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.

§ Wallace, laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought *anno* 1448. That glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.

‖ Coilus, king of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family-seat of the Montgomeries of Coil's-field, where his burial place is still shown.

¶ Barskimming, the seat of the lord justice-clerk.

** Catrine, the seat of the late doctor, and present professor Stewart.

* Colonel Fullarton.

All chuse, as various they're inclin'd,
The various man.

"When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some, strongly, rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain,
With tillage-skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blythe o'er the hill.

"Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some sooth the lab'rer's weary toil,
For humble gains,
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

"Some, bounded to a district-space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of *rustic bard*;
And careful note each op'ning grace,
A guide and guard.

"*Of these am I—Coila* my name;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the *Campbells*, chiefs of fame,
Held ruling power:
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

"With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or when the deep green-mantl'd earth
Warm cherish'd ev'ry flow'ret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove,
I saw thee eye the gen'ral mirth
With boundless love.

"When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
Call'd forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adored *Name*,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe the flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,
Misled by fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the *light* that led astray
Was *light* from heaven.

"I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
'Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of *Coila*'s plains,
Become thy friends.

"Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
To paint with *Thomson's* landscape-glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With *Shenstone's* art;
Or pour with *Gray*, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

"Yet all beneath th' unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows,
Adown the glade.

"Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And trust me, not *Potosi's* mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A *rustic bard*.

"To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve *the dignity of man*,
With soul erect;
And trust, the *universal plan*
Will all protect.

"*And wear thou this*"—she solemn said,
And bound the *holly* round my head:
The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

ADDRESS

TO THE UNCO GUID,

OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.

My son, these maxims make a rule,
And lump them aye thegither;
The rigid righteous *is a fool,*
The rigid wise *anither:*
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight
May hae some pyles o' caff in;
So ne'er a fellow-creature slight
For random fits o' daffin.
Solomon.—Eccles. ch. vii. ver. 16.

I.

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebour's fauts and folly!

Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supply'd wi' store o' water,
The heapet happer's ebbing still,
And still the clap plays clatter.

II.

Hear me, ye venerable core,
As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door
For glaikit Folly's portals;
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances.

III.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compar'd,
And shudder at the niffer,
But cast a moment's fair regard,
What maks the mighty differ;
Discount what scant occasion gave,
That purity ye pride in,
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)
Your better art o' hiding.

IV.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop,
What ragings must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop;
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
It maks an unco leeway.

V.

See social life and glee sit down,
All joyous and unthinking,
'Till, quite transmugrify'd, they're grown
Debauchery and drinking:
O would they stay to calculate
Th' eternal consequences;
Or your more dreaded hell to state,
D-mnation of expenses!

IV.

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames,
Ty'd up in godly laces,
Before ye gie poor *frailty* names,
Suppose a change o' cases;
A dear lov'd lad, convenience snug,
A treacherous inclination—
But, let me whisper i' your lug,
Ye're aiblins nae temptation.

VII.

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *why* they do it:
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

VIII.

Who made the heart, 'tis *he* alone
Decidedly can try us,
He knows each chord—its various tone,
Each spring—its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what's *resisted*.

TAM SAMSON'S* ELEGY.

An honest man's the noblest work of God.
Pope.

Has auld K********* seen the deil?
Or great M'********† thrawn his heel?
Or R********‡ again grow weel,
To preach an' read?
"Na, waur than a'!" cries ilka chiel,
"*Tam Samson's* dead!"

K********* lang may grunt an' grane,
An' sigh, an' sab, an' greet her lane,
An' cleed her bairns, man, wife, an' wean,
In mourning weed;
To death, she's dearly paid the kane,
Tam Samson's dead!

The brethren of the mystic *level*
May hing their head in wofu' bevel,
While by their nose the tears will revel,
Like ony bead;
Death's gein the lodge an unco devel,
Tam Samson's dead!

When winter muffles up his cloak,
And binds the mire like a rock;
When to the loughs the curlers flock,
Wi' gleesome speed,
Wha will they station at the *cock*,
Tam Samson's dead!

He was the king o' a' the core
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore,
Or up the rink like *Jehu* roar
In time of need;
But now he lags on death's *hog-score*,
Tam Samson's dead!

Now safe the stately sawmont sail,
And trouts bedropp'd wi' crimson hail,

---

* When this worthy old sportsman went out last muirfowl season, he supposed it was to be, in Ossian's phrase, "the last of his fields;" and expressed an ardent wish to die and be buried in the muirs. On this hint the author composed his elegy and epitaph.

† A certain preacher, a great favourite with the million. *Vide* the Ordination, stanza II.

‡ Another preacher, an equal favourite with the few, who was at that time ailing. For him see also the Ordination, stanza IX.

And eels weel ken'd for souple tail,
And geds for greed,
Since dark in death's *fish-creel* we wail
Tam Samson dead!

Rejoice, ye birring paitricks a';
Ye cootie moorcocks, crousely craw;
Ye maukins, cock your fud fu' braw,
Withouten dread;
Your mortal fae is now awa',
Tam Samson's dead!

That woefu' morn be ever mourn'd
Saw him in shootin graith adorn'd,
While pointers round impatient burn'd,
Frae couples freed;
But, och! he gaed and ne'er return'd!
Tam Samson's dead!

In vain auld age his body batters;
In vain the gout his ancles fetters;
In vain the burns came down like waters,
An acre braid!
Now ev'ry auld wife, greetin, clatters,
Tam Samson's dead!

Owre many a weary hag he limpit,
An' ay the tither shot he thumpit,
'Till coward death behind him jumpit,
Wi' deadly feide;
Now he proclaims, wi' tout o' trumpet,
Tam Samson's dead!

When at his heart he felt the dagger,
He reel'd his wonted bottle-swagger,
But yet he drew the mortal trigger
Wi' weel-aim'd heed;
"L—d, five!" he cry'd, an' owre did stagger;
Tam Samson's dead!

Ilk hoary hunter mourn'd a brither;
Ilk sportsman youth bemoan'd a father;
Yon auld gray stane, amang the heather,
Marks out his head,
Whare *Burns* has wrote, in rhyming blether,
Tam Samson's dead!

There low he lies, in lasting rest;
Perhaps upon his mould'ring breast
Some spitefu' muirfowl bigs her nest,
To hatch an' breed;
Alas! nae mair he'll them molest!
Tam Samson's dead!

When August winds the heather wave,
And sportsmen wander by yon grave,
Three vollies let his mem'ry crave
O' pouther an' lead,
'Till echo answer frae her cave,
Tam Samson's dead!

Heav'n rest his saul, whare'er he be!
Is the wish o' mony mae than me;
He had twa fauts, or may be three,
Yet what remead?
Ae social, honest man want we:
Tam Samson's dead!

THE EPITAPH.

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies.
Ye canting zealots, spare him!
If honest worth in heaven rise,
Ye'll mend or ye win near him.

PER CONTRA.

Go, Fame, an' canter like a filly
Thro' a' the streets an' neuks o' *Killie**,
Tell ev'ry social, honest billie
To cease his grievin,
For yet, unskaith'd by death's gleg gullie,
Tam Samson's livin.

The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but, for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added, to give some account of the principal charms and spells of that night, so big with prophecy to the peasantry in the west of Scotland. The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such should honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it, among the more unenlightened in our own.

HALLOWEEN†.

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art.
Goldsmith.

I.

Upon that night, when fairies light,
On *Cassilis Downans*‡ dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for *Colean* the rout is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There, up the *cove*§, to stray an' rove
Amang the rocks and streams
To sport that night.

---

* *Killie* is a phrase the country-folks sometimes use for Kilmarnock.

† Is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings, are all abroad on their baneful, midnight errands; particularly those aerial people, the fairies, are said, on that night, to hold a grand anniversary.

‡ Certain little, romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the earls of Cassilis.

§ A noted cavern near Colean-house, called the Cove of Colean; which, as Casilis Dowans, is famed in country story for being a favourite haunt of fairies.

II.

Amang the bonnie, winding banks,
Where *Doon* rins, wimplin, clear,
Where *Bruce** ance rul'd the martial ranks,
An' shook the *Carrick* spear,
Some merry, friendly, countra folks,
Together did convene,
To *burn* their nits, an' *pou* their stocks,
And haud their *Halloween*
Fu' blythe that night.

III.

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat,
Mair braw than when they're fine;
Their faces blythe, fu' sweetly kythe,
Hearts leal, an' warm, an' kin':
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs,
Weel knotted on their garten,
Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs,
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin
Whiles fast at night.

IV.

Then first and foremost, thro' the kail,
Their *stocks*† maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their een, an' graip an' wale,
For muckle anes an' straught anes.
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,
An' wander'd thro' the *bow-kail*,
An' pow't, for want o' better shift,
A *runt* was like a sow-tail,
Sae bow't that night.

V.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
They roar an' cry a' throu'ther;
The vera wee things, todlin, rin
Wi' stocks out-owre their shouther;
An' gif the *custoc's* sweet or sour,
Wi' joctelegs they taste them;
Syne coziely, aboon the door,
Wi cannie care, they've plac'd them
To lie that night

VI.

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a'
To pou their *stalks o' corn**;
But Rab slips out, an' jinks about,
Behint the muckle thorn:
He grippet Nelly hard an' fast;
Loud skirl'd a' the lasses;
But her *tap-pickle* maist was lost,
When kiutlin in the fause-house†
Wi' him that night.

VII.

The auld guidwife's weel hoordet *nits*‡
Are round an' round divided,
An' monie lads' and lasses' fates
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle, couthie, side by side,
An' burn thegither trimly;
Some start awa wi' saucy pride,
And jump out-owre the chimlie
Fu' high that night.

VIII.

Jean slips in twa wi' tentie e'e;
Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;
But this is *Jock*, an' this is *me*,
She says in to hersel:
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him,
As they wad never mair part;
'Till, fuff! he started up the lum,
An' Jean had e'en a sair heart
To see't that night.

IX.

Poor Willie, wi' his *bow-kail runt*,
Was *brunt* wi' primsie Mallie;
An' Mallie, nae doubt, took the drunt,
To be compar'd to Willie:
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling,
An' her ain fit it brunt it;
While Willie lap, and swoor by *jing*,
'Twas just the way he wanted
To be that night.

X.

Nell had the fause-house in her min',
She pits herself an' Robin:
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
'Till white in ase they're sobbin:

---

* The famous family of that name, the ancestors of *Robert*, the great deliverer of his country, were earls of Carrick.

† The first ceremony of Halloween is pulling each a *stock*, or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any *yird*, or earth, stick to the root, that is *tocher*, or fortune; and the taste of the *custoc*, that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or, to give them their ordinary appellation, the *runts*, are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of the people, whom chance brings into the house, are, according to the priority of placing the *runts*, the names in question.

* They go to the barn yard and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the *top-pickle*, that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will come to the marriage-bed any thing but a maid.

† When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green, or wet, the stack-builder, by means of old timber, &c. makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side, which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a *fause-house*.

‡ Burning the nuts is a famous charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire, and accordingly as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.

Nell's heart was dancin at the view,
She whisper'd Rob to leuk for't:
Rob, stowlins, prie'd her bonie mou,
Fu' cozie in the neuk for't,
Unseen that night.

XI.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin at their cracks,
And slips out by hersel:
She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
An' to the kiln she goes then,
An' darklins grapit for the bauks,
And in the *blue-clue** throws them,
Right fear't that night.

XII.

An' aye she win't, an' aye she swat,
I wat she made nae jaukin;
'Till something held within the pat,
Guid L—d! but she was quakin!
But whether 'twas the deil himsel,
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en',
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She did na wait on talkin
To spier that night.

XIII.

Wee Jenny to her graunie says,
"Will ye go wi' me, graunie?
I'll *eat the apple*† *at the glass*,
I gat frae uncle Johnie:"
She suff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,
In wrath she was sae vap'rin,
She notic't na, an aizle brunt
Her braw new worset apron
Out thro' that night.

XIV.

"Ye little skelpie-limmer's face!
How daur you try sic sportin,
As seek the foul thief ony place,
For him to spae your fortune?
Nae doubt but ye may get a *sight!*
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For monie a ane has gotten a fright,
An' liv'd an' di'd deleeret
On sic a night.

XV.

"Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,
I mind't as weel's yestreen,
I was a gilpey then, I'm sure
I was na past fyfteen:
The simmer had been cauld an' wat,
An' stuff was unco green;
An' aye a rantin kirn we gat,
And just on *Halloween*
It fell that night.

XVI.

"Our stibble-rig was Rab M'Graen,
A clever, sturdy fallow;
His sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
That liv'd in Achmacalla:
He gat *hemp-seed*,* I mind it weel,
An' he made unco light o't;
But monie a day was *by himsel*,
He was sae sairly frighted
That vera night."

XVII.

Then up gat fechtin Jamie Fleck,
An' he swoor by his conscience,
That he could *saw hemp-seed* a peck;
For it was a' but nonsense;
The auld guidman raught down the pock,
An' out a handfu' gied him;
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk,
Sometime when nae ane see'd him,
An' try't that night.

XVIII.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
Tho' he was something sturtin;
The *graip* he for a *harrow* taks,
An' haurls at his curpin:
An' ev'ry now an' then, he says,
"Hemp-seed, I saw thee,
An' her that is to be my lass,
Come after me, and draw thee
As fast this night."

XIX.

He whistl'd up lord Lenox' march,
To keep his courage cheary;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd an' eerie:
'Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle;
He by his shouther gae a keek,
An' tumbl'd wi' a wintle
Out-owre that night.

* Whoever would, with success, try this spell, must strictly observe these directions: Steal out, all alone, to the *kiln*, and, darkling, throw into the *pot*, a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a new clue off the old one; and, towards the latter end, something will hold the thread; demand, *who hauds?* i. e. who holds; and answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the christian and sirname of your future spouse.

† Take a candle, and go alone to a looking-glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion, *to be*, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.

* Steal out, unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp-seed; harrowing it with any thing you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat now and then, "Hemp-seed, I saw thee, hemp-seed, I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true-love, come after me and pou thee." Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, "come after me, and shaw thee," that is, show thyself; in which case it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, "come after me, and harrow thee."

XX.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shaut,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld came rinnin out,
An' hear the sad narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,
Or crouchie Merran Humphie,
'Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
An' wha was it but *Grumphie*
Asteer that night!

XXI.

Meg fain wad to the *barn* gaen,
To *win three wechts o' naething* ;*
But for to meet the deil her lane,
She pat but little faith in:
She gies the herd a pickle nits,
An' twa red cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the *barn* she sets,
In hopes to see Tam Kipples
That vera night.

XXII.

She turns the key wi' cannie thraw,
An' owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawnie gies a ca',
Syne bauldly in she enters:
A *ratton* rattled up the wa',
An' she cry'd L—d preserve her!
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',
An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,
Fu' fast that night.

XXIII.

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice;
They hecht him some fine braw ane;
It chanc'd the *stack* he *faddom't thrice*†,
Was timmer-propt for thrawin;
He taks a swirlie, auld moss-oak,
For some black, grousome carlin;
An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke,
'Till skin in blypes came haurlin
Aff's nieves that night.

XXIV.

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As canty as a kittlen;
But och! that night, amang the shaws,
She got a fearfu' settlin!
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin,
Whare *three lairds' lands met at a burn**,
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

XXV.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As thro' the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scar it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazle,
Unseen that night.

XXVI.

Amang the brachens, on the brae,
Between her an' the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey,
Gat up an' gae a croon:
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit,
But mist a fit, an' in the *pool*
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night.

XXVII.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The *luggies* three† are ranged,
And ev'ry time great care is ta'en,
To see them duly changed:
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
Sin *Mars-year* did desire,
Because he gat the toom-dish thrice,
He heav'd them on the fire
In wrath that night.

XXVIII.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks,
I wat they did na weary;
An' unco tales, an' funnie jokes,
Their sports were cheap, an' cheary;

---

* This charm must likewise be performed, unperceived, and alone. You go to the *barn*, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges, if possible; for there is danger, that the *being*, about to appear, may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which, in our country dialect, we call a *wetch;* and go through all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times; and the third time, an apparition will pass through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question, and the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life.

† Take an opportunity of going, unnoticed, to a *bear-stack*, and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms the appearance of your future conjugal yokefellow.

* You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south-running spring or rivulet, where "three lairds' lands meet," and dip your left shirt sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake; and, some time near midnight, an apparition, having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.

† Take three dishes; put clean water in one, foul water in another, leave the third empty: blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand: if, by chance, in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretels, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.

'Till *butter'd so'ns**, wi' fragrant lunt,
Set a' their gabs a-steerin;
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
They parted aff careerin
Fu' blythe that night.

THE AULD FARMER'S

NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION

TO HIS AULD MARE MAGGIE,

On giving her the accustomed ripp of corn to hansel in the new year.

A *guid new-year* I wish thee, Maggie!
Hae, there's a *ripp* to thy auld baggie:
Tho' thou's howe-backit, now, an' knaggie,
I've seen the day,
Thou could hae gaen like onie staggie
Out-owre the lay.

Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff, an' crazy,
An' thy auld hide as white's a daisy,
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek, and glaizie,
A bonny gray:
He should been tight that daur't to *raize* thee,
Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A *filly* buirdly, steeve, an' swank,
An' set weel down a shapely shank,
As e'er tread yird;
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank,
Like ony bird.

It's now some nine-an-twenty year,
Sin thou was my guid father's *meere;*
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear,
An' fifty mark;
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,
An' thou was stark.

When first I gaed to woo my *Jenny*,
Ye then was trottin wi' your minnie:
Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie,
Ye ne'er was donsie;
But hamely, tawie, quiet, an' cannie,
An' unco sonsie.

That day, ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonny *bride:*
An' sweet and gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air!
Kyle Stewart I could bragged wide,
For sic a pair.

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte and hoble,
An' wintle like a saumont-coble,
That day ye was a jinker noble,
For heels an' win'!
An' ran them till they a' did wauble,
Far, far behin'.

When thou an' I were young an' skeigh,
An' stable-meals at fairs were dreigh,
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh,
An' tak the road!
Town's bodies ran, an' stood abiegh,
An' ca't thee mad.

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,
We took the road aye like a swallow:
At *brooses* thou had ne'er a fellow,
For pith an' speed;
But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow,
Whare'er thou gaed.

The sma', droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle,
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;
But sax Scotch miles thou try't their mettle,
An' gar't them whaizle:
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle
O' saugh or hazle.

Thou was a noble *fittie-lan'*,
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours gaun,
On guid March-weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither.

Thou never braindg't, an' feeh't, an' fliskit,
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket,
Wi' pith and pow'r,
'Till spritty knows wad rair't and risket,
An' slypet owre.

When frosts lay lang, an snaws were deep,
An' threaten'd lahour back to keep,
I gied thy *cog* a wee-bit heap
Aboon the timmer;
I ken'd my *Maggie* wad na sleep
For that, or simmer.

In cart or car thou never reestit;
The steyest brae thou wad hae fac't it;
Thou never lap, an' sten't, an' breastit,
Then stood to blaw;
But just thy step a wee thing hastit,
Thou snoov't awa.

My *pleugh* is now thy bairn-time a';
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;
Forbye sax mae, I've sell't awa,
That thou hast nurst;
They drew me thretteen pund an' twa,
The vera warst.

Monie a sair daurk we twa ha wrought,
An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
An' monie an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

And think na, my auld, trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin,
An' thy auld days may end in starvin,
For my last *fau*,

* Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the *Halloween Supper.*

A heapit *stimpart*, I'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither;
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether,
To some hain'd rig,
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,
Wi' sma' fatigue.

TO A MOUSE,

On turning up her nest with the plough, November 1785.

Wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring *pattle!*

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' *fellow-mortal!*

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A *daimen icker* in a *thrave*
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit *housie*, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the wins are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell and keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
'Till crash! the cruel *coulter* past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving *foresight* may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' *mice* an' *men*
Gang aft a-gly,
An' lea's us nought but grief and pain,
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' *me!*
The *present* only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna *see*,
I *guess* an' *fear*.

A WINTER NIGHT.

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bid the pelting of this pityless storm!
How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these?——

Shakspeare.

When biting *Boreas*, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r;
When *Phœbus* gies a short-liv'd glow'r
Far south the lift,
Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r,
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,
Poor labour sweet in sleep was locked,
While burns, wi' snawy wreeths up-choked,
Wild-eddying swirl,
Or thro' the mining outlet bocked,
Down headlong hurl.

List'ning, the doors an' winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,
Beneath a scar.

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

Ev'n you on murd'ring errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exil'd,
The blood-stain'd roost, and sheep-cote spoil'd,
My heart forgets,
While pityless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

Now *Phœbe*, in her midnight reign,
Dark muffl'd, view'd the dreary plain;
Still crouding thoughts, a pensive train,
Rose in my soul,
When on my ear this plaintive strain,
Slow, solemn, stole—

"Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
Not all your rage, as now united, shows
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
Vengeful malice unrepenting,
Than heav'n-illumin'd man on brother man bestows!
See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, Want, and Murder o'er a land!

Ev'n in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
How pamper'd Luxury, Flatt'ry by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud property, extended wide;
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glitt'ring show,
A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance, unrefin'd,
Plac'd for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below.
Where, where is Love's fond, tender throe,
With lordly Honour's lofty brow,
The pow'rs you proudly own?
Is there, beneath Love's noble name,
Can harbour, dark, the selfish aim,
To bless himself alone!
Mark maiden-innocence a prey
To love-pretending snares,
This boasted Honour turns away,
Shunning soft Pity's rising sway,
Regardless of the tears, and unavailing pray'rs!
Perhaps, this hour, in Mis'ry's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking blast!
Oh ye! who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfy'd keen nature's clam'rous call,
Stretch'd on his straw he lays himself to sleep,
While thro' the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill, o'er his slumbers, piles the drifty heap!
Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
Where guilt and poor misfortune pine!
Guilt, erring man, relenting view!
But shall thy legal rage pursue
The wretch, already crushed low
By cruel fortune's undeserved blow?
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress,
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!"

I heard nae mair, for *Chanticleer*
Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hail'd the morning with a cheer,
A cottage-rousing craw.

But deep this truth impress'd my mind—
Thro' all his works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles *God.*

EPISTLE

TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.*

January ——

I.

While winds frae aff *Ben-Lomond* blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely westlin jingle.
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
Ben to the chimla lug,
I grudge a wee the great folks' gift,
That live sae bien an' snug:
I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker and canker,
To see their cursed pride.

II.

It's hardly in a body's pow'r,
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to wair't:
But, *Davie*, lad, ne'er fash your head,
Tho' we hae little gear,
We're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang's we're hale and fier:
"Mair spier na, no fear na'*,
Auld age ne'er mind a feg,
The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only for to beg.

III.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes we'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However fortune kick the ba',
Has aye some cause to smile:
And mind still, you'll find still,
A comfort this nae sma';
Nae mair then, we'll care then,
Nae farther can we fa'.

IV.

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
But either house or hal'?
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming year:
On braes when we please, then,
We'll sit and sowth a tune;
Syne *rhyme* till't, we'll time till't,
And sing't when we hae done.

V.

It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,

---

* *David Sillar*, one of the club at Tarbolton, and author of a volume of poems in the Scottish dialect. E.

* Ramsay.

To purchase peace and rest;
Its no in makin muckle *mair;*
Its no in books; its no in lear,
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest:
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The *heart* aye's the part aye,
That makes us right or wrang.

VI.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge and drive thro' wet an' dry,
Wi' never-ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way,
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how aft in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,
They riot in excess!
Baith careless, and fearless
Of either heav'n or hell!
Esteeming, and deeming
It's a' an idle tale!

VII.

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
By pining at our state;
And, even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet.
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel;
They make us see the naked truth,
The *real* guid and ill.
Tho' losses, and crosses,
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

VIII.

But tent me, *Davie*, ace o' hearts!
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
And flatt'ry I detest),
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches ne'er could buy;
And joys the very best.
There's a' the *pleasures o' the heart*,
The lover an' the frien';
Ye hae your *Meg*, your dearest part,
And I my darling *Jean!*
It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her *name:*
It heats me, it beets me,
And sets me a' on flame!

IX.

O' all ye pow'rs who rule above!
O *Thou*, whose very self art *love!*
Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
And solace to my breast.
Thou *Being*, all-seeing,
O hear my fervent pray'r;
Still take her, and make her
Thy most peculiar care!

X.

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
The sympathetic glow;
Long since this world's thorny ways
Had number'd out my weary days,
Had it not been for you!
Fate still has blest me with a friend
In every care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band,
A tie more tender still.
It lightens, it brightens
The tenebrific scene,
To meet with, and greet with
My *Davie* or my *Jean.*

XI.

O, how that *name* inspires my style!
The words come skelpin rank and file,
Amaist before I ken!
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
Were glowrin owre my pen.
My spaviet *Pegasus* will limp,
'Till ance he's fairly het;
And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp,
And rin an unco fit:
But lest then, the beast then,
Should rue this hasty ride,
I'll light now, and dight now
His sweaty wizen'd hide.

THE LAMENT,

Occasioned by the unfortunate issue

OF A FRIEND'S AMOUR.

Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself!
And sweet Affection *prove the spring of woe!*
Home.

I.

O thou pale orb, that silent shines,
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!
Thou seest a wretch that inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep!
With woe I nightly vigils keep,
Beneath thy wan unwarming beam;
And mourn in lamentation deep,
How *life* and *love* are all a dream.

II.

I joyless view thy rays adorn
The faintly-marked distant hill:
I joyless view thy trembling horn,
Reflected in the gurgling rill:

My fondly-fluttering heart, be still!
Thou busy pow'r, Remembrance, cease!
Ah! must the agonizing thrill
For ever bar returning peace!

III.

No idly-feign'd poetic pains,
My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim;
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame:
The plighted faith; the mutual flame;
The oft-attested pow'rs above;
The *promis'd father's tender name;*
These were the pledges of my love!

IV.

Encircled in her clasping arms,
How have the raptur'd moments flown!
How have I wish'd for fortune's charms,
For her dear sake, and her's alone!
And must I think it! is she gone,
My secret heart's exulting boast?
And does she heedless hear my groan?
And is she ever, ever lost?

V.

Oh! can she bear so base a heart,
So lost to honour, lost to truth,
As from the fondest lover part,
The plighted husband of her youth!
Alas! life's path may be unsmooth!
Her way may lie thro' rough distress!
Then, who her pangs and pains will soothe,
Her sorrows share, and make them less?

VI.

Ye winged hours that o'er us past,
Enraptur'd more, the more enjoy'd,
Your dear remembrance in my breast,
My fondly-treasur'd thoughts employ'd.
That breast how dreary now, and void,
For her too scanty once of room!
Ev'n ev'ry ray of hope destroy'd,
And not a *wish* to gild the gloom!

VII.

The morn that warns th' approaching day,
Awakes me up to toil and woe:
I see the hours in long array,
That I must suffer, lingering, slow.
Full many a pang, and many a throe,
Keen Recollection's direful train,
Must wring my soul, ere Phœbus, low,
Shall kiss the distant, western main.

VIII.

And when my nightly couch I try,
Sore-harass'd out with care and grief,
My toil-beat nerves, and tear-worn eye,
Keep watchings with the nightly thief:
Or if I slumber, Fancy, chief,
Reigns haggard-wild, in sore affright:
Ev'n day all-bitter brings relief,
From such a horror-breathing night.

IX.

O! thou bright queen, who o'er th' expanse,
Now highest reign'st, with boundless sway!
Oft has thy silent-marking glance
Observ'd us fondly-wand'ring, stray!
The time, unheeded, sped away,
While love's luxurious pulse beat high,
Beneath thy silver-gleaming ray
To mark the mutual kindling eye.

X.

Oh! scenes in strong remembrance set!
Scenes, never, never, to return!
Scenes, if in stupor I forget,
Again I feel, again I burn!
From ev'ry joy and pleasure torn,
Life's weary vale I'll wander thro';
And hopeless, comfortless, I'll mourn
A faithless woman's broken vow.

DESPONDENCY.

AN ODE.

I.

Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,
A burden more than I can bear,
I sit me down and sigh:
O life! thou art a galling load,
Along a rough, a weary road,
To wretches such as I!
Dim backward as I cast my view,
What sick'ning scenes appear!
What sorrows *yet* may pierce me thro',
Too justly I may fear!
Still caring, despairing,
Must be my bitter doom;
My woes here shall close ne'er.
But with the closing tomb!

II.

Happy, ye sons of busy life,
Who, equal to the bustling strife,
No other view regard!
Ev'n when the wished *end's* deny'd,
Yet while the busy *means* are ply'd,
They bring their own reward:
Whilst I, a hope-abandon'd wight,
Unfitted with an *aim*,
Meet ev'ry sad returning night,
And joyless morn the same,
You bustling, and justling,
Forget each grief and pain;
I listless, yet restless,
Find every prospect vain.

III.

How blest the solitary's lot,
Who, all-forgetting, all-forgot,
Within his humble cell,
The cavern wild with tangling root,
Sits o'er his newly-gather'd fruits,
Beside his crystal well!
Or, haply, to his ev'ning thought,
By unfrequented stream,
The ways of men are distant brought,
A faint collected dream:
While praising, and raising
His thoughts to heav'n on high,
As wand'ring, meand'ring,
He views the solemn sky.

IV.

Than I, no lonely hermit plac'd
Where never human footstep trac'd,
Less fit to play the part;
The lucky moment to improve,
And *just* to stop, and *just* to move,
With self-respecting art:
But ah! those pleasures, loves, and joys,
Which I too keenly taste,
The *solitary* can despise,
Can want, and yet be blest!
He needs not, he heeds not,
Or human love or hate,
Whilst I here must cry here,
At perfidy ingrate!

V.

Oh! enviable, early days,
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze,
To care, to guilt unknown!
How ill exchang'd for riper times,
To feel the follies, or the crimes.
Of others, or my own!
Ye tiny elves, that guiltless sport,
Like linnets in the bush,
Ye little know the ills ye court,
When manhood is your wish!
The losses, the crosses,
That *active man* engage!
The fears all, the tears all,
Of dim-declining *age!*

WINTER.

A DIRGE.

I.

The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest
And pass the heartless day.

II.

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast*,"
The joyless winter-day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it sooths my soul,
My griefs it seems to join,
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

III.

Thou *Pow'r Supreme*, whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they *must* be best,
Because they are *Thy* will!
Then all I want (O, do thou grant
This one request of mine!)
Since to *enjoy* thou dost deny,
Assist me to *resign.*

* Dr. Young.

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

Inscribed to R. A****, Esq.

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short but simple annals of the poor.
Gray.

I.

My lov'd, my honour'd, much-respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple *Scottish* lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What A**** in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there I ween!

II.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn *cotter* frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the *morn* in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

III.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant *wee-things*, toddlin, stacher thro'
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin noise and glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonnily,
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie *wifie's* smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labour an' his toil.

IV.

Belyve the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out, amang the farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor town:
Their eldest hope, their *Jenny*, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

V.

Wi' joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears;

The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The *mother*, wi' her needle an' her sheers,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;
The *father* mixes a' wi' admonition due.

VI.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
The younkers a' are warned to obey;
An' mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
An' ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
"An' O! be sure to fear the Lord alway!
An' mind your *duty*, duly, morn, an' night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore his counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the *Lord* aright!"

VII.

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in *Jenny's* e'e, and flush her cheek;
With heart-struck anxious care, enquires his name,
While *Jenny* hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

VIII.

Wi' kindly welcome *Jenny* brings him ben;
A strappan youth; he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe *Jenny* sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy.
But, blate and laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae grave;
Weel pleas'd to think her *bairn's* respected like the lave.

IX.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've paced much this weary *mortal round*,
And sage *experience* bids me this declare—
"If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In others' arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

X.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet *Jenny's* unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

XI.

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The healsome *parritch*, chief o' *Scotia's* food:
The soupe their only *hawkie* does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:
The dame brings forth in complimental mood,
To gracee the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,
An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

XII.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big *ha'-Bible*, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside.
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And "*Let us worship God!*" he says, with solemn air.

XIII.

They chaunt their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin* beets the heav'n-ward flame,
The sweetest far of *Scotia's* holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

XIV.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How *Abram* was the *friend of God* on high;
Or *Moses* bade eternal warfare wage
With *Amalek's* ungracious progeny;
Or how the *royal bard* did groaning lye
Beneath the stroke of heaven's avenging ire;
Or *Job's* pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt *Isaiah's* wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

XV.

Perhaps the *Christian volume* is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How *He*, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head:
How his first followers and servants sped,
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How *he*, who lone in *Patmos* banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great *Bab'lon's* doom pronounc'd by heav'n's command.

XVI.

Then kneeling down, to *Heaven's eternal king*,
The *saint*, the *father*, and the *husband* prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing*,"
That *thus* they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their *Creator's* praise,
In such society, yet still more dear,
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

XVII.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the *heart!*
The *pow'r*, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some *cottage* far apart,
May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in his *book of life* the inmates poor enroll.

XVIII.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their *secret homage* pay,
And proffer up to heaven the warm request
That *He*, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with *grace divine* preside.

XIX.

From scenes like these old *Scotia's* grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man's the noblest work of *God*;"
And *certes*, in fair virtue's heav'nly road,
The *cottage* leaves the *palace* far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!

XX.

O *Scotia!* my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, O! may heaven their simple lives prevent
From Luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er *crowns* and *coronets* be rent,
A *virtuous populace* may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd *isle*.

XXI.

O *Thou!* who pour'd the patriotic tide
That stream'd thro' *Wallace*'s undaunted heart;
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die the second glorious part,
(The patriot's *God* peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, *Scotia's* realm desert;
But still the *patriot*, and the *patriot bard*,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

* Pope's Windsor Forest.

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

A DIRGE.

I.

When chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,
One ev'ning, as I wander'd forth
Along the banks of *Ayr*,
I spy'd a man, whose aged step
Seem'd weary, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,
And hoary was his hair.

II.

Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?
Began the rev'rend sage;
Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
Or youthful pleasure's rage?
Or haply, prest with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me, to mourn
The miseries of man.

III.

The sun that overhangs yon moors,
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
A haughty lordling's pride;
I've seen yon weary winter-sun
Twice forty times return;
And ev'ry time has added proofs
That man was made to mourn.

IV.

O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Mis-spending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime!
Alternate follies take the sway;
Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives nature's law,
That man was made to mourn.

V.

Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported is his right:
But see him on the edge of life,
With cares and sorrows worn,
Then age and want, oh! ill-match'd pair!
Show man was made to mourn.

VI.

A few seem favourites of fate,
In pleasure's lap carest;

Yet, think not all the rich and great
Are likewise truly blest.
But, oh! what crowds in ev'ry land
Are wretched and forlorn!
Thro' weary life this lesson learn,
That man was made to mourn.

VII.

Many and sharp the num'rous ills
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves,
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heav'n-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

VIII.

See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly *fellow-worm*
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.

IX.

If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave,
By Nature's law design'd,
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty or scorn?
Or why has man the will and pow'r
To make his fellow mourn?

X.

Yet, let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast:
This partial view of human-kind
Is surely not the *last!*
The poor, oppressed, honest man,
Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

XI.

O death! the poor man's dearest friend,
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn;
But, oh! a blest relief to those
That weary-laden mourn!

A PRAYER

IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

I.

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

II.

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun;
As *something*, loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done;

III.

Thou know'st that thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong!
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

IV.

Where human *weakness* has come short,
Or *frailty* stept aside,
Do thou, *All-Good!* for such thou art,
In shades of darkness hide.

V.

Where with *intention* I have err'd,
No other plea I have,
But *Thou art good;* and goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

STANZAS ON THE SAME OCCASION.

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between;
Some gleams of sunshine mid renewing storms:
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But, should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might desert fair virtue's way;
Again in folly's path might go astray;
Again exalt the brute and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation ran?

O Thou, great Governor of all below!
If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
Or still the tumult of the raging sea:
With that controuling pow'r assist ev'n me,
Those headlong furious passions to confine:
For all unfit I feel my powers to be,
To rule their torrent in th' allowed line;
O, aid me with thy help, *Omnipotence Divine!*

Lying at a reverend friend's house one night, the author left the following

VERSES

In the room where he slept.

O thou dread Pow'r, who reign'st above!
I know thou wilt me hear:

When for this scene of peace and love,
I make my pray'r sincere.

II.

The hoary sire—the mortal stroke,
Long, long, be pleas'd to spare
To bless his little filial flock,
And show what good men are.

III.

She, who her lovely offspring eyes
With tender hopes and fears,
O bless her with a mother's joys,
But spare a mother's tears!

IV.

Their hope, their stay, their darling youth,
In manhood's dawning blush;
Bless him, thou God of love and truth,
Up to a parent's wish.

V.

The beauteous, seraph sister-band,
With earnest tears I pray,
Thou know'st the snares on ev'ry hand,
Guide thou their steps alway.

VI.

When soon or late they reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driv'n,
May they rejoice, no wand'rer lost,
A family in heav'n!

THE FIRST PSALM.

The man, in life wherever plac'd,
Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
Nor learns their guilty lore:

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees
Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
Shall to the ground be cast,
And like the rootless stubble tost,
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

A PRAYER

Under the pressure of violent anguish.

O Thou Great Being! what thou art
Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure I am, that known to thee
Are all thy works below.

Thy creature here before thee stands,
All wretched and distrest;
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
Obey thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act
From cruelty or wrath!
O, free my weary eyes from tears,
Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves
To bear and not repine!

THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM.

O Thou, the first, the greatest friend
Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
Their stay and dwelling place!

Before the mountains heav'd their heads
Beneath thy forming hand,
Before this pond'rous globe itself,
Arose at thy command;

That pow'r which rais'd and still upholds
This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time
Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before thy sight
Than yesterday that's past.

Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man,
Is to existence brought;
Again thou say'st, "Ye sons of men,
Return ye into nought!"

Thou layest them, with all their cares,
In everlasting sleep;
As with a flood thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flow'r,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night cut down it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY,

On turning one down with the plough, in April, 1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem;
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie *lark*, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' speckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield;
But thou beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie *stibble-field*,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the *share* uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet *flow'ret* of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
'Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of *prudent lore*,
'Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to *suffering worth* is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n,
To mis'ry's brink,
'Till, wrench'd of ev'ry stay but *Heav'n*,
He, ruin'd, sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern ruin's *plough-share* drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
'Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom!

TO RUIN.

I.

All hail! inexorable lord!
At whose destruction-breathing word
The mightiest empires fall!
Thy cruel, woe-delighted train,
The ministers of grief and pain,
A sullen welcome, all!
With stern-resolv'd, despairing eye,
I see each aimed dart;
For one has cut my *dearest tie*,
And quivers in my heart.
Then low'ring, and pouring,
The *storm* no more I dread;
Tho' thick'ning and black'ning
Round my devoted head.

II.

And thou grim pow'r, by life abhorr'd,
While life a *pleasure* can afford,
Oh! hear a wretch's pray'r!
No more I shrink appal'd, afraid;
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,
To close this scene of care!
When shall my soul, in silent peace,
Resign life's *joyless* day;
My weary heart its throbbing cease,
Cold mould'ring in the clay?
No fear more, no tear more,
To stain my lifeless face;
Enclasped, and grasped
Within thy cold embrace!

TO MISS L——,

WITH BEATTIE'S POEMS

As a New Year's Gift, Jan. 1, 1787.

Again the silent wheels of time
Their annual round have driv'n,
And you, tho' scarce in maiden prime,
Are so much nearer Heav'n.

No gifts have I from Indian coasts
The infant year to hail;
I send you more than India boasts
In *Edwin's* simple tale.

Our sex with guile and faithless love
Is charg'd, perhaps, too true;
But may, dear maid, each lover prove
An *Edwin* still to you.

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

May ——, 1786.

I.

I lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend,
A something to have sent you,
Tho' it should serve nae other end
Than just a kind *memento*;

But how the subject-theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps turn out a sermon.

II.

Ye'll try the world soon, my lad,
And, *Andrew* dear, believe me,
Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye:
For care and trouble set your thought,
Ev'n when your end's attained;
And a' your views may come to nought,
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

III.

I'll no say, men are villains a';
The real, harden'd wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricked:
But och, mankind are unco weak,
An' little to be trusted;
If *self* the wavering balance shake,
Its rarely right adjusted!

IV.

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,
Their fate we should na censure,
For still th' *important end* of life,
They equally may answer;
A man may hae an honest heart,
Tho' poortith hourly stare him;
A man may tak a neebor's part,
Yet nae hae *cash* to spare him.

V.

Aye free, aff han' your story tell,
When wi' a bosom crony;
But still keep something to yoursel
Ye scarcely tell to ony.
Conceal yoursel as weel's ye can
Frae critical dissection;
But keek thro' ev'ry other man,
Wi' sharpen'd sly inspection.

VI.

The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' *illicit rove*,
Tho' naething should divulge it:
I wave the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!

VII.

To catch dame fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justified by honour;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train-attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being *independent*.

VIII.

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
To haud the wretch in order;
But where ye feel your *honour* grip,
Let that aye be your border:
Its slightest touches, instant pause—
Debar a' side pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Unearing consequences.

IX.

The great *Creator* to revere,
Must sure become the *creature*;
But still the preaching cant forbear,
And ev'n the rigid feature:
Yet ne'er with wits prophane to range,
Be complaisance extended;
An atheist's laugh's a poor exchange
For Deity offended!

X.

When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
Religion may be blinded;
Or if she gie a *random sting*,
It may be little minded;
But when on life we're tempest-driv'n,
A conscience but a canker—
A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n
Is sure a noble *anchor!*

XI.

Adieu, dear, amiable youth!
Your heart can ne'er be wanting!
May prudence, fortitude, and truth,
Erect your brow undaunted!
In ploughman phrase, "God send you speed,"
Still daily to grow wiser:
And may you better reck the *rede*,
Than ever did th' adviser.

ON A SCOTCH BARD,

GONE TO THE WEST INDIES.

A' ye wha live by soups o' drink,
A' ye wha live by crambo-clink,
A' ye wha live and never think,
Come mourn wi' me!
Our *billie's* gien us a' jink,
An' owre the sea.

Lament him a' ye rantin core,
Wha dearly like a random-splore,
Nae mair he'll join the *merry roar*,
In social key;
For now he's taen anither shore,
An' owre the sea!

The bonnie lasses weel may wiss him,
And in their dear *petitions* place him:
The widows, wives, an' a' may bless him,
W' tearfu' e'e;
For weel I wat they'll sairly miss him
That's owre the sea!

O fortune, they hae room to grumble!
Hadst thou taen aff some drowsy bumble,
Wha can do nought but fyke an' fumble,
'Twad been nae plea;
But he was gleg as ony wumble,
That's owre the sea!

Auld, cantie *Kyle* may weepers wear,
An' stain them wi' the saut, saut tear;
'Twill mak her poor auld heart, I fear,
In flinders flee;
He was her *laureat* monie a year,
That's owre the sea!

He saw misfortune's cauld *nor-west*
Lang mustering up a bitter blast;
A jillet brak his heart at last,
Ill may she be!
So, took a birth afore the mast,
An' owre the sea.

To tremble under fortune's cummock,
On scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock,
Wi' his proud, independent stomach,
Could ill agree;
So, row't his hurdies in a *hammock*,
An' owre the sea.

He ne'er was gien to great misguiding,
Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in;
Wi' him it ne'er was *under hiding*;
He dealt it free;
The muse was a' that he took pride in,
That's owre the sea.

Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
An' hap him in a cozie biel:
Ye'll find him aye a dainty chiel,
And fou' o' glee;
He wad na wrang'd the vera deil,
That's owre the sea.

Fareweel, my *rhyme-composing billie!*
Your native soil was right ill-willie;
But may ye flourish like a lily,
Now bonnilie!
I'll toast ye in my hindmost gillie,
Tho' owre the sea!

TO A HAGGIS.

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye wordy of a *grace*
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your *pin* wad help to mend a mill
In time o' need,
While thro' your pores the dews distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic labour dight,
An' cut you up wi' ready slight,
Trenching your gushing entrails bright
Like onie ditch;
And then, O what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin, rich!

Then horn for horn they stretch an' strive,
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,
'Till a' their weel-swall'd kytes belyve
Are bent like drums;
Then auld guidman, maist like to rive,
Bethankit hums.

Is there that o'er his French *ragout*,
Or *olio* that wad staw a sow,
Or *fricassee* wad mak her spew
Wi' perfect sconner,
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view
On sic a dinner!

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckless as a wither'd rash,
His spindle shank a guid whip-lash,
His nieve a nit;
Thro' bloody flood or field to dash,
O how unfit!

But mark the rustic, *haggis-fed*,
The trembling earth resounds his tread,
Clap in his walie nieve a blade,
He'll mak it whissle;
An' legs, an' arms, an' head will sned,
Like taps o' thrissle.

Ye pow'rs wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies;
But, if ye wish her gratefu' pray'r,
Gie her a *haggis!*

A DEDICATION.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

Expect na, sir, in this narration,
A fleechin, fleth'rin dedication,
To roose you up, an' ca' you guid,
An' sprung o' great an' noble bluid,
Because ye're sirnam'd like *his grace*,
Perhaps related to the race;
Then when I'm tir'd—and sae are *ye*,
Wi' mony a fulsome, sinfu' lie,
Set up a face, how I stop short,
For fear your modesty be hurt.

This may do—maun do, sir, wi' them wha
Maun please the great folk for a wamefou;
For me! sae laigh I needna bow,
For, Lord be thankit, *I can plough*;
And when I downa yoke a naig,
Then, Lord be thankit, *I can beg*;
Sae I shall say, an' that's nae flatt'rin,
It's just *sic poet*, an' *sic patron*.

The poet, some guid angel help him,
Or else, I fear some ill ane skelp him,
He may do weel for a' he's done yet,
But only he's no just begun yet.

The patron, (sir, ye maun forgie me,
I winna lie, come what will o' me,)
On ev'ry hand it will allow'd be,
He's just—nae better than he should be.

I readily and freely grant,
He downa see a poor man want;
What's no his ain he winna tak it,
What ainee he says he winna break it;
Ought he can lend he'll no refus't,
'Till aft his guidness is abus'd;
And rascals whyles that do him wrang,
Ev'n *that*, he does na mind it lang:
As master, landlord, husband, father,
He does na fail his part in either.

But then, nae thanks to him for a' that;
Nae *godly symptom* ye can ca' that;
It's naething but a milder feature
Of our poor, sinfu', corrupt nature:
Ye'll get the best o' moral works,
'Mang black Gentoos and pagan Turks,
Or hunters wild on *Ponotaxi*,
Wha never heard of orthodoxy.
That he's the poor man's friend in need,
The *gentleman* in word and deed,
It's no thro' terror of d-mn-ti-on;
It's just a carnal inclination.

Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain!
Vain is his hope, whose stay and trust is
In *moral* mercy, truth, and justice!

No—stretch a point to catch a plack;
Abuse a brother to his back;
Steal thro' a *winnock* frae a wh-re,
But point the rake that taks the *door;*
Be to the poor like onie whunstane,
And haud their noses to the grunstane,
Ply ev'ry art o' *legal* thieving;
No matter, stick to *sound believing*.

Learn three-mile pray'rs, an' half-mile graces,
Wi' weel-spread looves, an' lang, wry faces;
Grunt up a solemn, lengthen'd groan,
And damn a' parties but your own;
I'll warrant then, ye're nae deceiver,
A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.

O ye wha leave the springs of *C-lv-n*,
For *gumlie dubs* of your ain delvin!
Ye sons of heresy and error,
Ye'll some day squeel in quaking terror!
When vengeance draws the sword in wrath,
And in the fire throws the sheath;
When ruin, with his sweeping *besom*,
Just frets 'till heav'n commission gies him:
While o'er the *harp* pale mis'ry moans,
And strikes the ever-deep'ning tones,
Still louder shrieks, and heavier groans!

Your pardon, sir, for this digression,
I maist forgat my *dedication;*
But when divinity comes cross me,
My readers still are sure to lose me.

So, sir, ye see 'twas nae daft vapour,
But I maturely thought it proper,
When a' my works I did review,
To dedicate them, sir, to *you:*
Because (ye need na tak it ill)
I thought them something like yoursel.

Then patronize them wi' your favour,
And your petitioner shall ever——
I had amaist said, *ever pray*,
But that's a word I need na say:
For prayin I hae little skill o't;
I'm baith dead-sweer, an' wretched ill o't;
But I'se repeat each pray'r
That kens or hears about you, sir——

"May ne'er misfortune's growling bark
Howl thro' the dwelling o' the *clerk!*
May ne'er his gen'rous, honest heart,
For that same gen'rous spirit smart!
May K******'s fair-honour'd name
Lang beet his hymeneal flame,
'Till H*******s, at least a dizen,
Are frae their nuptial labours risen:
Five bonnie lasses round their table,
And seven braw fellows, stout an' able
To serve their king and country weel,
By word, or pen, or pointed steel!
May health and peace, with mutual rays,
Shine on the evening o' his days;
'Till his wee curlie *John's* ier-oe,
When edding life nae mair shall flow,
The last, sad, mournful rites bestow."

I will not wind a lang conclusion
Wi' complimentary effusion:
But whilst your wishes and endeavours
Are blest with fortune's smiles and favours,
I am, dear sir, with zeal most fervent,
Your much indebted, humble servant.

But if (which pow'rs above prevent)
That iron-hearted carl, *Want*,
Attended in his grim advances,
By sad mistakes, and black mischances,
While hopes, and joys, and pleasures fly him,
Make you as poor a dog as I am,
Your *humble servant* then no more;
For who would humbly serve the poor!
But by a poor man's hopes in Heav'n!
While recollection's pow'r is given,
If, in the vale of humble life,
The victim sad of fortune's strife,
I, thro' the tender gushing tear,
Should recognize my *master dear*,
If friendless, low, we meet together,
Then, sir, your hand—my *friend* and *brother!*

TO A LOUSE,

On seeing one on a lady's bonnet, at church.

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin ferlie!
Your impudence protects you sairly:
I canna say but ye strunt rarely
Owre gauze and lace;
Tho' faith, I fear ye dine but sparely
On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin, blastit wonner,
Detested, shunn'd by saunt an' sinner,
How dare ye set your fit upon her,
Sae fine a lady!
Gae somewhere else and seek your dinner
On some poor body.

Swith, in some beggar's haffet squattle;
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle
Wi' ither kindred, jumpin cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whare *horn* nor *bane* ne'er dare unsettle
Your thick plantations.

Now haud you there, ye're out o' sight,
Below the fatt'rils, snug an' tight;
Na, faith ye yet! ye'll no be right
'Till ye've got on it,
The vera tapmost, tow'ring height
O' *miss's bonnet*.

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,
As plump and gray as onie grozet;
O for some rank, mercurial rozet,
Or fell, red smeddum,
I'd gie you sic a hearty doze o't,
Wad dress your droddum!

I wad na been surpris'd to spy
You on an auld wife's flainen toy;
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy,
On's wylecoat;
But miss's fine *lunardi!* fie,
How dare ye do't!

O, *Jenny*, dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abread!
Ye little ken what cursed speed
The blastie's makin!
Thae *winks* and *finger-ends*, I dread,
Are notice takin!

O wad some pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
And ev'n devotion!

ADDRESS TO EDINBURGH.

I.

Edina! *Scotia's* darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,
Where once, beneath a monarch's feet,
Sat legislation's sov'reign pow'rs!
From marking wildly-scatter'd flow'rs,
As on the banks of *Ayr* I stray'd,
And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,
I shelter in thy honour'd shade.

II.

Here Wealth still swells the golden tide,
As busy Trade his labours plies;
There Architecture's noble pride
Bids elegance and splendour rise;
Here Justice, from her native skies,
High wields her balance and her rod;
There Learning, with his eagle eyes,
Seeks Science in her coy abode.

III.

Thy sons, *Edina*, social, kind,
With open arms the stranger hail;
Their views enlarg'd, their lib'ral mind,
Above the narrow, rural vale;
Attentive still to sorrow's wail,
Or modest merit's silent claim;
And never may their sources fail!
And never envy blot their name!

IV.

Thy daughters bright thy walks adorn!
Gay as the gilded summer sky,
Sweet as the dewy milk-white thorn,
Dear as the raptur'd thrill of joy!
Fair B—— strikes th' adoring eye,
Heav'n's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the *sire of love on high*,
And own his work indeed divine!

V.

There, watching high the least alarms,
Thy rough rude fortress gleams afar;
Like some bold vet'ran, gray in arms,
And mark'd with many a seamy scar:
The pond'rous wall and massy bar,
Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock,
Have oft withstood assailing war,
And oft repell'd the invader's shock.

VI.

With awe-struck thought, and pitying tears,
I view that noble, stately dome,
Where *Scotia's* kings of other years,
Fam'd heroes, had their royal home:
Alas, how chang'd the times to come!
Their royal name low in the dust!
Their hapless race wild-wand'ring roam!
Tho' rigid law cries out, 'twas just!

VII.

Wild beats my heart to trace your steps,
Whose ancestors, in days of yore,
Thro' hostile ranks and ruin'd gaps
Old *Scotia's* bloody lion bore:
Ev'n *I*, who sing in rustic lore,
Haply *my sires* have left their shed,
And fac'd grim danger's loudest roar,
Bold-following where *your* fathers led!

VIII.

Edina! Scotia's darling seat!
All hail thy palaces and tow'rs,

Where once beneath a monarch's feet
Sat legislation's sov'reign pow'rs!
From marking wildly-scatter'd flow'rs,
As on the banks of *Ayr* I stray'd,
And singing, lone, the ling'ring hours,
I shelter in thy honour'd shade.

EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK,

AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.

April 1st, 1785.

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin loud at e'en,
An' morning poussie whiddin seen,
Inspire my muse,
This freedom in an *unknown* frien'
I pray excuse.

On fasten-een we had a rockin,
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin;
And there was muckle fun an' jokin,
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin
At *sang about.*

There was ae *sang*, amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleas'd me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,
A' to the life.

I've scarce heard ought describes sae weel
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I, "Can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark?"
They tald me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About *Muirkirk.*

It pat me fidgin-fain to hear't,
And sae about him there I spier't,
Then a' that ken't him round declar'd
He had *ingine*,
That nane excell'd it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine.

That set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce or merry tale,
Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel,
Or witty catches,
'Tween Inverness and Tiviotdale
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith,
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh and graith,
Or die a cadger pownie's death,
At some dyke-back,
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith
To hear your crack.

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the *crambo-jingle* fell,
Tho' rude an' rough,
Yet crooning to a body's sel,
Does weel eneugh.

I am nae *poet*, in a sense,
But just a *rhymer*, like, by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly *verse* frae *prose*,
To make a *sang?*"
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
If honest nature made you *fools*,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye'd better taen up spades and shools,
Or knappin-hammers.

A set o' dull, conceited hashes
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They *gang in* stirks, and *come out* asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark of nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then though I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o' *Allan's* glee,
Or *Fergusson's*, the bauld and slee,
Or bright *Lapraik's*, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear eneugh for me,
If I could get it.

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Tho' real friends, I b'lieve are few,
Yet, if your catalogue be fou,
I'se no insist,
But gif ye want ae friend that's true,
I'm on your list.

I winna blaw about mysel;
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends and folks that wish me well,
They sometimes roose me;
Tho' I maun own, as monie still
As far abuse me.

There's ae *wee faut* they whiles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For monie a plack they wheedle frae me,
At dance or fair;
Maybe some *ither thing* they gie me
They weel can spare.

But *Mauchline* race, or *Mauchline* fair,
I should be proud to meet you there;
We'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather,
An' hae a swap o' *rhymin-ware*
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,
An' kirsen him wi' reekin water;
Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter,
To cheer our heart;
An' faith, we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa, ye selfish warly race,
Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace,
Ev'n love an' friendship, should give place
To *catch-the-plack!*
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your *being* on the terms,
"Each aid the others,"
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle;
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle,
Who am, most fervent,
While I can either sing or whissle,
Your friend and servant.

TO THE SAME.

April 21*st*, 1785.

While new-ca'd kye rout at the stake,
An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik,
This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
To own I'm debtor
To honest-hearted, auld *Lapraik*,
For his kind letter.

Forjesket sair, with weary legs,
Rattling the corn out-owre the rigs,
Or dealing thro' amang the naigs
Their ten hours bite,
My awkart muse sair pleads and begs,
I would na write.

The tapetless ramfeezl'd hizzie,
She's saft at best, and something lazy,
Quo' she, "Ye ken, we've been sae busy
This month an' mair,
That trouth my head is grown right dizzie,
An' something sair."

Her dowff excuses pat me mad;
"Conscience," says I, "ye thowless jad!
I'll write, an' that a hearty blaud,
This vera night;
So dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

"Shall bauld *Lapraik*, the king o' hearts,
Tho' mankind were a pack o' cartes,
Roose you sae weel for your deserts,
In terms sae friendly,
Yet ye'll neglect to shaw your parts,
An' thank him kindly?"

Sae I get paper in a blink,
An' down gaed *stumpie* in the ink:
Quoth I, "Before I sleep a wink,
I vow I'll close it;
An' if ye winna mak it clink,
By Jove I'll prose it!"

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither,
Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof;
But I shall scribble down some blether
Just clean aff-loof.

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge an' carp,
Tho' fortune use you hard an' sharp;
Come, kittle up your *moorland-harp*
Wi' gleesome touch!
Ne'er mind how fortune *waft* an' *warp*;
She's but a b-tch.

She's gien me monie a jirt an' fleg,
Sin I could striddle owre a rig;
But, by the L—d, tho' I should beg
Wi' lyart pow,
I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow!

Now comes the sax an' twentieth simmer
I've seen the bud upo' the timmer,
Still persecuted by the limmer
Frae year to year;
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer,
I, Rob, am here.

Do ye envy the city *gent*
Behint a kist to lie and sklent,
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.
And muckle wame,
In some bit brugh to represent
A *bailie's* name?

Or is't the paughty, feudal thane,
Wi' ruffl'd sark an' glancing cane,
Wha thinks himsel nae sheep-shank bane,
But lordly stalks,
While caps and bonnets aff are taen,
As by he walks?

"O *Thou* wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit an' sense a lift,
Then turn me, if *Thou* please, adrift,
Thro' Scotland wide;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift,
In a' their pride!"

Were this the *charter* of our state,
"On pain o' hell be rich an' great,"

Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead;
But, thanks to Heav'n, that's no the gate
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began,
"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils *great Nature's plan*,
An' none but *he!*"

O mandate glorious and divine!
The followers of the ragged nine,
Poor, thoughtless devils! yet may shine
In glorious light,
While sordid sons of Mammon's line
Are dark as night.

Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,
Their worthless nievefu' of a soul
May in some future carcase howl
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light.

Then may *Lapraik* and *Burns* arise,
To reach their native, kindred skies,
And *sing* their pleasures, hopes, an' joys,
In some mild sphere,
Still closer knit in friendship's ties
Each passing year!

TO W. S*****N,

OCHILTREE.

May, 1785.

I gat your letter, winsome *Willie;*
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawlie;
Tho' I maun say't, I wad be silly,
An' unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin billie,
Your flatterin strain.

But I'se believe ye kindly meant it,
I sud be laith to think ye hinted
Ironic satire, sidelens sklented
On my poor Musie;
Tho' in sic phraisin terms ye've penn'd it,
I scarce excuse ye.

My senses wad be in a creel,
Should I but dare a *hope* to speel,
Wi' *Allen*, or wi' *Gilbertfield*,
The braes o' fame;
Or *Fergusson*, the writer-chiel,
A deathless name.

(O *Fergusson!* thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye Enbrugh gentry!
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry!)

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed,
As whiles they're like to be my dead,
(O sad disease!)
I kittle up my *rustic reed;*
It gies me ease.

Auld *Coila* now may fidge fu' fain,
She's gotten poets o' her ain.
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain,
But tune their lays
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd stile;
She lay like some unken'd-of isle
Beside *New-Holland*,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth *Magellan*.

Ramsay an' famous *Fergusson*
Gied *Forth* an' *Tay* a lift aboon;
Yarrow an' *Tweed*, to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings,
While *Irwin*, *Lugar*, *Ayr*, an' *Doon*,
Nae body sings.

Th' *Illissus*, *Tiber*, *Thames*, an' *Seine*,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line!
But, *Willie*, set your fit to mine,
An' cock your crest,
We'll gar our streams an' burnies shine
Up wi' the best.

We'll sing auld *Coila's* plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,
Where glorious *Wallace*
Aft bure the gree, as story tells,
Frae southron billies.

At *Wallace'* name what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By *Wallace'* side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat shod,
Or glorious dy'd.

O sweet are *Coila's* haughs an' woods,
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,
And jinkin hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
With wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of *Ochiltree*
Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O *Nature!* a' thy shows an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light,

Or winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The muse, nae poet ever fand her,
'Till by himsel he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

The warly race may drudge an' drive,
Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch an' strive,
Let me fair *Nature's* face descrive,
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure.

Fareweel, "my rhyme-composing brither!"
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither:
Now let us lay our heads thegither,
In love fraternal:
May *Envy* wallop in a tether,
Black fiend, infernal!

While highlandmen hate tolls an' taxes;
While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies;
While terra firma, on her axis
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In *Robert Burns*.

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory's no worth a preen;
I had amaist forgotten clean,
Ye bade me write you what they mean
By this *new-light**,
'Bout which our *herds* sae aft hae been
Maist like to fight.

In days when mankind were but callans
At *grammar*, *logic*, an' sic talents,
They took nae pains their speech to balance,
Or rules to gie,
But spak their thoughts in plain, braid lallans,
Like you or me.

In thae auld times, they thought the *moon*,
Just like a sark, or pair o' shoon,
Wore by degrees, 'till her last roon
Gaed past their viewing,
An' shortly after she was done,
They gat a new one.

This past for certain, undisputed;
It ne'er cam i' their heads to doubt it,
'Till chiels gat up an' wad confute it,
An' ca'd it wrang;
An' muckle din there was about it,
Baith loud an' lang.

Some *herds*, weel learn'd upo' the beuk,
Wad threap auld folk the thing misteuk;
For 'twas the *auld moon* turn'd a neuk,
An' out o' sight,
An', backlins-comin, to the leuk
She grew mair bright.

This was deny'd, it was affirm'd;
The *herds* an' *hissels* were alarm'd:
The rev'rend gray-beards rav'd an' storm'd,
That beardless laddies
Should think they better were inform'd
Than their auld daddies.

Frae less to mair it gaed to sticks;
Frae words an' aiths to clours an' nicks;
An' monie a fallow gat his licks,
Wi' hearty grunt;
An' some, to learn them for their tricks,
Were hang'd an' brunt.

This game was play'd in monie lands,
An' *auld light* caddies bure sic hands,
That faith, the youngsters took the sands
Wi' nimble shanks,
Till lairds forbade, by strict commands,
Sic bluidy pranks.

But *new-light herds* gat sic a cowe,
Folk thought them ruin'd stick-an-stowe,
'Till now amaist on ev'ry knowe
Ye'll find ane plac'd;
An' some, their *new-light* fair avow,
Just quite barefac'd.

Nae doubt the *auld-light flocks* are bleatin;
Their zealous *herds* are vex'd an' sweatin;
Mysel, I've even seen them greetin
Wi' girnin spite,
To hear the *moon* sae sadly lie'd on
By word an' write.

But shortly they will cowe the louns!
Some *auld-light herds* in neebor towns
Are mind't, in things they ca' *balloons*,
To tak a flight,
An' stay ae month amang the *moons*
An' see them right.

Guid observation they will gie them;
An' when the *auld moon*'s gaun to lea'e them,
The hindmost shaird, they'll fetch it wi' them,
Just i' their pouch,
An' when the *new-light* billies see them,
I think they'll crouch!

Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter
Is naething but a "moonshine matter;"
But tho' dull prose-folk latin splatter
In logic tulzie,
I hope, we bardies ken some better
Than mind sic brulzie.

EPISTLE TO J. R******,

INCLOSING SOME POEMS.

O rough, rude, ready-witted R******,
The wale o' cocks for fun and drinkin!

* See note, p. 243.

There's monie godly folks are thinkin,
Your *dreams** an' tricks
Will send you, Korah-like, a-sinkin,
Straught to auld Nick's.

Ye hae sae monie cracks an' cants,
And in your wicked, drunken rants,
Ye mak a devil o' the saunts,
An' fill them fou;
And then their failings, flaws, an' wants,
Are a' seen thro'.

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, O dinna tear it!
Spare't for their sakes wha aften wear it,
The lads in *black*;
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives't aff their back.

Think, wicked sinner, wha ye're skaithing,
It's just the *blue-gown* badge an' claithing
O' saunts; tak that, ye lea'e them naithing
To ken them by,
Frae ony unregenerate heathen
Like you or I.

I've sent you here some rhyming ware,
A' that I bargain'd for an' mair;
Sae, whan ye hae an hour to spare,
I will expect,
Yon *sang*†, ye'll sen't wi' cannie care,
And no neglect.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing!
I've play'd mysel a bonnie spring,
An' danc'd my fill!
I'd better gaen an' sair'd the king
At *Bunker's Hill*.

'Twas ae night lately in my fun,
I gaed a roving wi' the gun,
An' brought a *patrick* to the grun,
A bonnie hen,
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

The poor wee thing was little hurt;
I straikit it a wee for sport,
Ne'er thinkin they wad fash me for't;
But, deil-me-care!
Somebody tells the *poacher-court*
The hale affair.

Some auld us'd hands had taen a note,
That sic a hen had got a shot;
I was suspected for the plot;
I scorn'd to lie;
So gat the whissle o' my groat,
An' pay't the *fee*.

But, by my gun, o' guns the wale,
An' by my pouther an' my hail,
An' by my hen, an' by her tail,
I vow an' swear!
The *game* shall pay o'er moor an' dale,
For this, niest year.

As soon's the clockin-time is by,
An' the wee pouts begin to cry,
L—d, I'se hae sportin by an' by,
For my gowd guinea:
Tho' I should herd the *buckskin* kye
For't, in Virginia.

Trowth, they had muckle for to blame!
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,
But twa-three draps about the wame
Scarce thro' the feathers;
An' baith a yellow George to claim,
An' thole their blethers!

It pits me aye as mad's a hare;
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;
But *pennyworths* again is fair,
When times expedient;
Meantime I am, respected sir,
Your most obedient.

* A certain humorous *dream* of his was then making a noise in the country-side.

† A *song* he had promised the author.

JOHN BARLEYCORN*,

A BALLAD.

I.

There was three kings into the east,
Three kings both great and high,
An' they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn should die.

II.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.

III.

But the chearful spring came kindly on,
And show'rs began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surpris'd them all.

IV.

The sultry suns of summer came,
And he grew thick and strong,
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
That no one should him wrong.

V.

The sober autumn enter'd mild,
When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
Show'd he began to fail.

* This is partly composed on the plan of an old song known by the same name.

VI.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
To shew their deadly rage.

VII.

They've taen a weapon, long and sharp,
And cut him by the knee;
Then ty'd him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.

VIII.

They laid him down upon his back,
And cudgell'd him full sore;
They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

IX.

They filled up a darksome pit
With water to the brim,
They heaved in John Barleycorn,
There let him sink or swim.

X.

They laid him out upon the floor,
To work him farther woe,
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
They toss'd him to and fro.

XI.

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,
The marrow of his bones;
But a miller us'd him worst of all,
For he crush'd him between two stones.

XII.

And they hae taen his very heart's blood,
And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.

XIII.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise,
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.

XIV.

'Twill make a man forget his woe;
'Twill heighten all his joy:
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
Tho' the tear were in her eye.

XV.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland!

A FRAGMENT.

Tune, "*Gillicrankie.*"

I.

When *Guilford* good our pilot stood,
And did our hellim thraw, man,
Ae night, at tea, began a plea,
Within *America*, man:
Then up they gat the maskin-pat,
And in the sea did jaw, man;
An' did nae less, in full congress,
Than quite refuse our law, man.

II.

Then thro' the lakes *Montgomery* takes,
I wat he was na slaw, man;
Down *Lowrie's burn* he took a turn,
And *Carleton* did ca', man:
But yet, what-reck, he, at *Quebec*,
Montgomery-like did fa', man,
Wi' sword in hand, before his band,
Amang his en'mies a', man.

III.

Poor *Tammy Gage* within a cage
Was kept at *Boston ha'*, man;
'Till *Willie Howe* took o'er the knowe
For *Philadelphia*, man:
Wi' sword an' gun he thought a sin
Guid christian blood to draw, man;
But at *New-York*, wi' knife an' fork,
Sir-loin he hacked sma', man.

IV.

Burgoyne gaed up, like spur an' whip,
'Till *Fraser* brave did fa', man;
Then lost his way, ae misty day,
In *Saratoga* shaw, man.
Cornwallis fought as lang's he dought,
An' did the buckskins claw, man;
But *Clinton's* glaive frae rust to save
He hung it to the wa', man.

V.

Then *Montague*, an' *Guilford* too,
Began to fear a fa, man;
And *Sackville* doure, wha stood the stoure,
The German chief to thraw, man:
For paddy *Burke*, like ony Turk,
Nae mercy had at a', man;
An' *Charley Fox* threw by the box,
An' lows'd his tinkler jaw, man.

VI.

Then *Rockingham* took up the game;
Till death did on him ca', man;
When *Shelburne* meek held up his cheek,
Conform to gospel law, man:
Saint Stephen's boys, wi' jarring noise,
They did his measures thraw, man,
For *North* an' *Fox* united stocks,
An' bore him to the wa', man.

VII.

Then clubs an' hearts were *Charlie's* cartes,
He swept the stakes awa', man,
'Till the diamond's ace, of *Indian* race,
Led him a sair *faux pas*, man:
The Saxon lads, wi' loud placads,
On *Chatham's boy* did ca', man;
An' Scotland drew her pipe an' blew,
"Up, Willie, waur them a', man!"

VIII.

Behind the throne then *Grenville's* gone,
A secret word or twa, man;
While slee *Dundas* arous'd the class
Be-north the Roman wa', man:
An' *Chatham's* wraith, in heavenly graith,
(Inspired bardies saw, man,)
Wi' kindling eyes cry'd, "*Willie*, rise!
Would I hae fear'd them a', man!"

IX.

But, word and blow, *North*, *Fox*, *and Co.*
Gowff'd *Willie* like a ba', man,
'Till *Suthron* raise, and coost their claise
Behind him in a raw, man,
An' *Caledon* threw by the drone,
An' did her whittle draw, man;
An' swoor fu' rude, thro' dirt an' blood
To make it guid in law, man.

* * * * * * *

SONG.

Tune, "*Corn rigs are bonnie.*"

I.

It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonnie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
I held awa to Annie:
The time flew by wi' tentless heed,
'Till 'tween the late and early;
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed
To see me thro' the barley.

II.

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
The moon was shining clearly;
I set her down, wi' right good will,
Amang the rigs o' barley:
I ken't her heart was a' my ain;
I lov'd her most sincerely;
I kiss'd her owre and owre again
Amang the rigs o' barley.

III.

I lock'd her in my fond embrace;
Her heart was beating rarely;
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moon and stars so bright,
That shone that hour so clearly!
She aye shall bless that happy night,
Amang the rigs o' barley.

IV.

I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear;
I hae been merry drinkin;
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin gear;
I hae been happy thinking:
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubl'd fairly,
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs o' barley.

CHORUS.

Corn rigs, an' barley rigs,
An' corn rigs are bonnie:
I'll ne'er forget that happy night,
Amang the rigs wi' Annie.

SONG,

Composed in August.

Tune, "*I had a horse, I had nae mair.*"

I.

Now westlin winds, and slaught'ring guns
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs, on whirring wings,
Amang the blooming heather:
Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
Delights the weary farmer;
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night,
To muse upon my charmer.

II.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells;
The plover loves the mountains;
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells;
The soaring hern the fountains:
Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves
The path of man to shun it;
The hazel bush o'erhangs the thrush,
The spreading thorn the linnet.

III.

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine;
Some solitary wander;
Avaunt, away! the cruel sway,
Tyrannic man's dominion;
The sportsman's joy, the murd'ring cry,
The flutt'ring, gory pinion!

IV.

But, *Peggy* dear, the ev'ning's clear,
Thick flies the skimming swallow;
The sky is blue, the fields in view
All fading-green and yellow:
Come let us stray our gladsome way,
And view the charms of nature:
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
And ev'ry happy creature.

V.

We'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
'Till the silent moon shine clearly;
I'll grasp thy waist, and, fondly prest,
Swear how I love thee dearly:
Not vernal show'rs to budding flow'rs,
Not autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
My fair, my lovely charmer!

SONG.

Tune, "*My Nanie, O.*"

I.

Behind yon hills where Lugar* flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
And I'll awa to Nanie, O.

II.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill;
The night's baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I'll get my plaid an' out I'll steal,
An' owre the hills to Nanie, O.

III.

My Nanie's charming, sweet, an' young;
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nanie, O.

IV.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonnie, O;
The op'ning gowan, wet wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nanie, O.

V.

A country lad is my degree,
An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be,
I'm welcome aye to Nanie, O.

VI.

My riches a's my penny-fee,
An' I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a' my Nanie, O.

VII.

Our auld guidman delights to view
His sheep an' kye thrive bonnie, O;
But I'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh,
An' has nae care but Nanie, O.

VIII.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I'll tak what Heav'n will sen' me, O;
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nanie, O.

GREEN GROWS THE RASHES.

A FRAGMENT.

CHORUS.

Green grow the rashes, O;
Green grow the rashes, O;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spent
Are spent amang the lasses, O.

* Originally, Stinchar.

I.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O:
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O!
Green grow, &c.

II.

The warly race may riches chase,
An' riches still may flee them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.
Green grow, &c.

III.

But gie me a canny hour at e'en,
My arms about my dearie, O,
An' warly cares, an' warly men,
May a' gang tapsaltëerie, O!
Green grow, &c.

IV.

For you sae douse, ye sneer at this,
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

V.

Auld nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her prentice han' she try'd on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.
Green grow, &c.

* * * * * * *

SONG.

Tune, "*Jockey's grey breeks.*"

I.

Again rejoicing nature sees
Her robe assume its vernal hues,
Her leafy locks wave in the breeze
All freshly steep'd in morning dews.

CHORUS*.

And maun I still on Menie† doat,
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e!
For it's jet, jet black, an' it's like a hawk,
An' it winna let a body be!

II.

In vain to me the cowslips blaw,
In vain to me the vi'lets spring;
In vain to me, in glen or shaw,
The mavis and the lintwhite sing.
And maun I still, &c.

* This chorus is part of a song composed by a gentleman in Edinburgh, a particular friend of the author's.

† *Menie* is the common abbreviation of *Marianne*.

III.

The merry ploughboy cheers his team,
Wi' joy the tentie seedsman stalks,
But life to me's a weary dream,
A dream of ane that never wauks.
And maun I still, &c.

IV.

The wanton coot the water skims,
Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,
The stately swan majestic swims,
And every thing is blest but I.
And maun I still, &c.

V.

The sheep-herd steeks his faulding slap,
And owre the moorlands whistles shill,
Wi' wild, unequal, wand'ring step
I meet him on the dewy hill.
And maun I still, &c.

VI.

And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,
Blythe waukens by the daisy's side,
And mounts and sings on flittering wings,
A woe-worn ghaist I hameward glide.
And maun I still, &c.

VII.

Come, Winter, with thine angry howl,
And raging bend the naked tree;
Thy gloom will soothe my chearless soul,
When nature all is sad like me!

CHORUS.

And maun I still on Menie doat,
And bear the scorn that's in her e'e!
For it's jet, jet black, and it's like a hawk,
An' it winna let a body be.*

SONG.

Tune, "*Roslin Castle.*"

I.

The gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast,
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
The hunter now has left the moor,
The scatter'd coveys meet secure,
While here I wander, prest with care,
Along the lonely banks of *Ayr*.

II.

The autumn mourns her rip'ning corn
By early winter's ravage torn;
Across her placid, azure sky,
She sees the scowling tempest fly:
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave,
I think upon the stormy wave,
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonnie banks of *Ayr*.

III.

'Tis not the surging billow's roar,
'Tis not that fatal deadly shore;
Tho' death in ev'ry shape appear,
The wretched have no more to fear:
But round my heart the ties are bound,
That heart transpierc'd with many a wound;
These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,
To leave the bonnie banks of *Ayr*.

IV.

Farewell, old *Coila's* hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past, unhappy loves!
Farewell, my friends! Farewell, my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare,
Farewell the bonnie banks of *Ayr*.

SONG.

Tune, "*Gilderoy.*"

I.

From thee, *Eliza*, I must go,
And from my native shore;
The cruel fates between us throw
A boundless ocean's roar:
But boundless oceans, roaring wide,
Between my love and me,
They never, never can divide
My heart and soul from thee;

II.

Farewell, farewell, *Eliza* dear,
The maid that I adore!
A boding voice is in mine ear,
We part to meet no more!
But the last throb that leaves my heart,
While death stands victor by,
That throb, *Eliza*, is thy part,
And thine that latest sigh!

THE FAREWELL,

To the Brethren of St. James's Lodge,

TARBOLTON.

Tune, "*Goodnight and joy be wi' you a'.*"

I.

Adieu! a heart-warm, fond adieu!
Dear brothers of the *mystic tye!*
Ye favour'd, ye *enlighten'd* few,
Companions of my social joy!
Tho' I to foreign lands must hie,
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba',
With melting heart, and brimful eye,
I'll mind you still, tho' far awa'.

* We cannot presume to alter any of the poems of our bard, and more especially those printed under his own direction; yet it is to be regretted that this chorus, which is not of his own composition, should be attached to these fine stanzas, as it perpetually interrupts the train of sentiment which they excite. E.

II.

Oft have I met your social band,
And spent the chearful, festive night;
Oft, honour'd with supreme command,
Presided o'er the *sons of light:*
And by that *hieroglyphic* bright,
Which none but *craftsmen* ever saw!
Strong mem'ry on my heart shall write
Those happy scenes when far awa';

III.

May freedom, harmony, and love,
Unite you in the *grand design*,
Beneath th' omniscient eye above,
The glorious *Architect* divine!
That you may keep th' *unerring line*,
Still rising by the *plummet's law*,
Till *order* bright completely shine,
Shall be my pray'r when far awa'.

IV.

And *you* farewell! whose merits claim,
Justly, that *highest badge* to wear!
Heav'n bless your honour'd, noble name,
To *masonry* and *Scotia* dear!
A last request permit me here,
When yearly ye assemble a',
One *round*, I ask it with a *tear*,
To him, *the bard that's far awa'*.

SONG.

Tune, "*Prepare, my dear brethren, to the tavern let's fly.*"

I.

No churchman am I for to rail and to write,
No statesman nor soldier to plot or to fight,
No sly man of business contriving a snare,
For a big-belly'd bottle 's the whole of my care.

II.

The peer I don't envy, I give him his bow;
I scorn not the peasant, tho' ever so low;
But a club of good fellows, like those that are here,
And a bottle like this, are my glory and care.

III.

Here passes the squire on his brother—his horse;
There centum per centum, the cit with his purse;
But see you the *crown* how it waves in the air,
There a big-belly'd bottle still eases my care.

IV.

The wife of my bosom, alas! she did die;
For sweet consolation to church I did fly;
I found that old Solomon proved it fair,
That a big-belly'd bottle 's a cure for all care.

V.

I once was persuaded a venture to make;
A letter inform'd me that all was to wreck;
But the pursy old landlord just waddled up stairs,
With a glorious bottle that ended my cares.

VI.

"Life's cares they are comforts*"—a maxim laid down
By the bard, what d'ye call him, that wore the black gown;
And faith I agree with' th' old prig to a hair;
For a big-belly'd bottle 's a heav'n of care.

A Stanza added in a Mason Lodge.

Then fill up a bumper and make it o'erflow,
And honours masonic prepare for to throw;
May every true brother of the compass and square
Have a big-belly'd bottle when harass'd with care.

WRITTEN IN

FRIARS-CARSE HERMITAGE,

ON NITH-SIDE.

Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole,
Grave these counsels on thy soul.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night, in darkness lost;
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour,
Fear not clouds will always lour.

As youth and love with sprightly dance,
Beneath thy morning star advance,
Pleasure with her siren air
May delude the thoughtless pair;
Let prudence bless enjoyment's cup,
Then raptur'd sip, and sip it up.

As thy day grows warm and high,
Life's meridian flaming nigh,
Dost thou spurn the humble vale?
Life's proud summits wouldst thou scale?
Check thy climbing step, elate,
Evils lurk in felon wait:
Dangers, eagle-pinioned, bold,
Soar around each cliffy hold,
While chearful peace, with linnet song,
Chants the lowly dells among.

As the shades of ev'ning close,
Beck'ning thee to long repose;
As life itself becomes disease,
Seek the chimney-nook of ease.
There ruminate with sober thought,
On all thou'st seen, and heard, and wrought;
And teach the sportive younkers round,
Saws of experience, sage and sound.
Say, man's true, genuine estimate,
The grand criterion of his fate,
Is not, art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?
Did many talents gild thy span?
Or frugal nature grudge thee one?

* Young's Night Thoughts.

Tell them, and press it on their mind,
As thou thyself must shortly find,
The smile or frown of awful Heav'n
To virtue or to vice is giv'n.
Say, to be just, and kind, and wise,
There solid self-enjoyment lies;
That foolish, selfish, faithless ways,
Lead to the wretched, vile, and base.

Thus resign'd and quiet, creep
To the bed of lasting sleep;
Sleep, whence thou shalt ne'er awake,
Night, where dawn shall never break,
'Till future life, future no more,
To light and joy the good restore,
To light and joy unknown before.

Stranger, go! Heav'n be thy guide!
Quod the beadsman of Nith-side.

ODE,

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

MRS. —— OF ——.

Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
Hangman of creation mark!
Who in widow weeds appears,
Laden with unhonoured years,
Noosing with care a bursting purse,
Baited with many a deadly curse!

STROPHE.

View the wither'd beldam's face—
Can thy keen inspection trace
Aught of humanity's sweet melting grace?
Note that eye, 'tis rheum o'erflows,
Pity's flood there never rose.
See those hands, ne'er stretch'd to save,
Hands that took—but never gave.
Keeper of Mammon's iron chest,
Lo, there she goes, unpitied and unblest;
She goes, but not to realms of everlasting rest!

ANTISTROPHE.

Plunderer of armies, lift thine eyes,
(A while forbear, ye tort'ring fiends,)
Seest thou whose step, unwilling, hither bends?
No fallen angel, hurl'd from upper skies;
'Tis thy trusty *quondam mate*,
Doom'd to share thy fiery fate,
She, tardy, hell-ward plies.

EPODE.

And are they of no more avail,
Ten thousand glitt'ring pounds a-year?
In other worlds can Mammon fail,
Omnipotent as he is here?
O, bitter mockery of the *pompous bier*,
While down the wretched *vital part* is driv'n!
The cave-lodg'd beggar, with a conscience clear,
Expires in rags, unknown, and goes to Heav'n.

ELEGY

ON CAPT. MATTHEW HENDERSON,

A gentleman who held the patent for his honours immediately from Almighty God!

But now his radiant course is run,
For Matthew's course was bright;
His soul was like the glorious sun,
And matchless Heav'nly Light!

O Death! thou tyrant fell and bloody!
The meikle devil wi' a woodie
Haurl thee hame to his black smiddie,
O'er hurcheon hides,
And like stock-fish come o'er his studdie
Wi' thy auld sides!

He's gane, he's gane! he's frae us torn,
The ae best fellow e'er was born!
Thee, Matthew, Nature's sel shall mourn
By wood and wild,
Where, haply, pity strays forlorn,
Frae man exil'd.

Ye hills, near neebors o' the starns,
That proudly cock your cresting cairns!
Ye cliffs, the haunts of sailing yearns,
Where echo slumbers!
Come join, ye Nature's sturdiest bairns,
My wailing numbers!

Mourn, ilka grove the cushat kens!
Ye hazly shaws and briery dens!
Ye burnies, wimplin down your glens,
Wi' toddlin din,
Or foaming, strang, wi' hasty stens,
Frae lin to lin.

Mourn, little harebells o'er the lee;
Ye stately foxgloves fair to see;
Ye woodbines hanging bonnilie,
In scented bow'rs;
Ye roses on your thorny tree,
The first o' flow'rs.

At dawn, when ev'ry grassy blade
Droops with a diamond at his head,
At ev'n, when beans their fragrance shed,
I' th' rustling gale,
Ye maukins whiddin thro' the glade,
Come join my wail.

Mourn, ye wee songsters o' the wood;
Ye grouss that crap the heather bud;
Ye curlews calling thro' a clud;
Ye whistling plover;
And mourn, ye whirring paitrick brood;
He's gane for ever!

Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals,
Ye fisher herons, watching eels;
Ye duck and drake, wi' airy wheels
Circling the lake;
Ye bitterns, 'till the quagmire reels,
Rair for his sake.

Mourn, clam'ring craiks at close o' day,
'Mang fields o' flow'ring clover gay;
And when ye wing your annual way
Frae our cauld shore,
Tell thae far warlds, wha lies in clay,
Wham we deplore.

Ye houlets, frae your ivy bow'r,
In some auld tree, or eldritch tow'r,
What time the moon, wi' silent glowr,
Sets up her horn,
Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour
'Till waukrife morn!

O, rivers, forests, hills, and plains!
Oft have ye heard my canty strains:
But now, what else for me remains
But tales of woe;
And frae my een the drapping rains
Maun ever flow.

Mourn, spring, thou darling of the year!
Ilk cowslip cup shall kep a tear:
Thou, simmer, while each corny spear
Shoots up its head,
Thy gay, green, flow'ry tresses shear,
For him that's dead!

Thou, autumn, wi' thy yellow hair,
In grief thy sallow mantle tear!
Thou, winter, hurling thro' the air
The roaring blast,
Wide o'er the naked world declare
The worth we've lost!

Mourn him, thou sun, great source of light!
Mourn, empress of the silent night!
And you, ye twinkling starnies bright,
My Matthew mourn!
For through your orbs he's taen his flight,
Ne'er to return.

O, *Henderson!* the man! the brother!
And art thou gone, and gone for ever!
And hast thou crost that unknown river,
Life's dreary bound!
Like thee, where shall I find another,
The world around!

Go to your sculptur'd tombs, ye great,
In a' the tinsel trash o' state!
But by thy honest turf I'll wait,
Thou man of worth!
And weep the ae best fellow's fate
E'er lay in earth.

THE EPITAPH.

Stop, passenger! my story's brief,
And truth I shall relate, man;
I tell nae common tale o' grief,
For Matthew was a great man.

If thou uncommon merit hast,
Yet spurn'd at fortune's door, man;
A look of pity hither cast,
For Matthew was a poor man.

If thou a noble sodger art,
That passest by this grave, man,
There moulders here a gallant heart;
For Matthew was a brave man.

If thou on men, their works and ways,
Canst throw uncommon light, man;
Here lies wha weel had won thy praise,
For Matthew was a bright man.

If thou at friendship's sacred ca'
Wad life itself resign, man;
Thy sympathetic tear maun fa',
For Matthew was a kind man!

If thou art staunch without a stain,
Like the unchanging blue, man;
This was a kinsman o' thy ain,
For Matthew was a true man.

If thou hast wit, and fun, and fire,
And ne'er gude wine did fear, man;
This was thy billie, dam, and sire,
For Matthew was a queer man.

If ony whiggish whingin sot,
To blame poor Matthew dare, man;
May dool and sorrow be his lot,
For Matthew was a rare man.

LAMENT

OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS

ON THE APPROACH OF SPRING.

Now nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
Out o'er the grassy lea:
Now Phœbus cheers the crystal streams,
And glads the azure skies;
But nought can glad the weary wight
That fast in durance lies.

Now lav'rocks wake the merry morn,
Aloft on dewy wing;
The merle, in his noontide bow'r,
Makes woodland echoes ring;
The mavis mild, wi' many a note,
Sings drowsy day to rest:
In love and freedom they rejoice,
Wi' care nor thrall opprest.

Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae:
The meanest hind in fair Scotland
May rove their sweets amang;
But I, the queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strang.

I was the queen o' bonnie France,
Where happy I hae been;
Fu' lightly rase I in the morn,
As blythe lay down at e'en:

And I'm the sov'reign of Scotland,
And mony a traitor there;
Yet here I lie in foreign bands,
And never ending care.

But as for thee, thou false woman,
My sister and my fae,
Grim vengeance, yet, shall whet a sword
That thro' thy soul shall gae:
The weeping blood in woman's breast
Was never known to thee;
Nor th' balm that draps on wounds of woe
Frae woman's pitying e'e.

My son! my son! may kinder stars
Upon thy fortune shine:
And may those pleasures gild thy reign,
That ne'er wad blink on mine!
God keep thee frae thy mother's faes,
Or turn their hearts to thee:
And where thou meet'st thy mother's friend,
Remember him for me!

O! soon, to me, my summer-suns
Nae mair light up the morn!
Nae mair, to me, the autumn winds
Wave o'er the yellow corn!
And in the narrow house o' death
Let winter round me rave;
And the next flow'rs, that deck the spring,
Bloom on my peaceful grave.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

OF FINTRA.

Late crippl'd of an arm, and now a leg,
About to beg a *pass* for leave to beg;
Dull, listless, teas'd, dejected, and deprest,
(Nature is adverse to a cripple's rest);
Will generous *Graham* list to his poet's wail?
(It soothes poor misery, harkening to her tale),
And hear him curse the light he first survey'd,
And doubly curse the luckless rhyming trade.

Thou, nature, partial nature, I arraign;
Of thy caprice maternal I complain.
The lion and the bull thy care have found,
One shakes the forests, and one spurns the ground;
Thou giv'st the ass his hide, the snail his shell,
Th' envenom'd wasp, victorious, guards his cell.—
Thy minions, kings defend, controul, devour,
In all th' omnipotence of rule and power.—
Foxes and statesmen, subtile wiles ensure;
The cit and polecat stink, and are secure.
Toads with their poison, doctors with their drug,
The priest and hedgehog in their robes are snug.
Ev'n silly woman has her warlike arts,
Her tongue and eyes, her dreaded spear and darts.

But O! thou bitter step-mother and hard,
To thy poor, fenceless, naked child—the bard!
A thing unteachable in world's skill,
And half an ideot too, more helpless still.
No heels to hear him from the op'ning dun;
No claws to dig, his hated sight to shun;
No horns, but those by luckless Hymen worn,
And those, alas! not Amalthea's horn:
No nerves olfact'ry, Mammon's trusty cur,
Clad in rich dulness' comfortable fur.
In naked feeling, and in aching pride,
He bears th' unbroken blast from ev'ry side:
Vampyre booksellers drain him to the heart,
And scorpion critics cureless venom dart.

Critics—appall'd, I venture on the name,
Those cut-throat bandits in the path of fame:
Bloody dissectors, worse than ten Monros;
He hacks to teach, they mangle to expose.

His heart, by causeless wanton malice wrung,
By blockhead's daring into madness stung;
His well-won bays, than life itself more dear,
By miscreants torn, who ne'er one sprig must wear;
Foil'd, bleeding, tortur'd, in the unequal strife,
The hapless poet flounders on through life.
'Till fled each hope that once his bosom fir'd,
And fled each muse that glorious once inspir'd,
Low sunk in squalid, unprotected age,
Dead, even resentment, for his injur'd page,
He heeds or feels no more the ruthless critic's rage!

So by some hedge, the gen'rous steed deceas'd,
For half-starv'd snarling curs a dainty feast;
By toil and famine wore to skin and bone,
Lies senseless of each tugging bitch's son.

O dulness! portion of the truly blest!
Calm shelter'd haven of eternal rest!
Thy sons ne'er madden in the fierce extremes
Of fortune's polar frost, or torrid beams.
If mantling high she fills the golden cup,
With sober selfish ease they sip it up:
Conscious the bounteous meed they well deserve,
They only wonder "some folks" do not starve.
The grave sage hern thus easy picks his frog,
And thinks the mallard a sad worthless dog.
When disappointment snaps the clue of hope,
And thro' disastrous night they darkling grope,
With deaf endurance sluggishly they bear,
And just conclude that "fools are fortune's care."
So, heavy, passive to the tempest's shocks,
Strong on the sign-post stands the stupid ox.

Not so the idle muses' mad-cap train,
Not such the workings of their moon-struck brain;
In equanimity they never dwell,
By turns in soaring heav'n, or vaulted hell.

I dread thee, fate, relentless and severe,
With all a poet's, husband's, father's fear!
Already one strong hold of hope is lost,
Glencairn, the truly noble, lies in dust;
(Fled, like the sun eclips'd as noon appears,
And left us darkling in a world of tears):
O! hear my ardent, grateful, selfish pray'r!
Fintra, my other stay, long bless and spare!
Thro' a long life his hopes and wishes crown;
And bright in cloudless skies his sun go down!
May *bliss domestic* smooth his private path;
Give energy to life; and soothe his latest breath,
With many a filial tear circling the bed of death!

LAMENT

FOR JAMES, EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

The wind blew hollow frae the hills,
By fits the sun's departing beam
Look'd on the fading yellow woods
That wav'd o'er Lugar's winding stream:
Beneath a craigy steep, a bard,
Laden with years and meikle pain,
In loud lament bewail'd his lord,
Whom death had all untimely ta'en.

He lean'd him on an ancient aik,
Whose trunk was mould'ring down with years;
His locks were bleached white with time,
His hoary cheek was wet wi' tears;
And as he touch'd his trembling harp,
And as he tun'd his doleful sang,
The winds, lamenting thro' their caves,
To echo bore the notes alang.

"Ye scatter'd birds that faintly sing,
The reliques of the vernal quire!
Ye woods that shed on a' the winds
The honours of the aged year!
A few short months, and glad and gay,
Again ye'll charm the ear and e'e;
But nocht in all revolving time
Can gladness bring again to me.

"I am a bending aged tree,
That long has stood the wind and rain;
But now has come a cruel blast,
And my last hald of earth is gane:
Nae leaf o' mine shall greet the spring,
Nae simmer sun exalt my bloom;
But I maun lie before the storm,
And ithers plant them in my room.

"I've seen sae mony changefu' years,
On earth I am a stranger grown;
I wander in the ways of men,
Alike unknowing and unknown:
Unheard, unpitied, unreliev'd,
I bear alane my lade o' care,
For silent, low, on beds of dust,
Lie a' that would my sorrows share.

"And last, (the sum of a my griefs)!
My noble master lies in clay;
The flow'r amang our barons bold,
His country's pride, his country's stay:
In weary being now I pine,
For a' the life of life is dead,
And hope has left my aged ken,
On forward wing for ever fled.

"Awake thy last sad voice, my harp!
The voice of woe and wild despair!
Awake, resound thy latest lay,
Then sleep in silence evermair!
And thou, my last, best, only friend,
That fillest an untimely tomb,
Accept this tribute from the bard
Thou brought from fortune's mirkest gloom.

"In poverty's low barren vale,
Thick mists, obscure, involv'd me round;
Though oft I turn'd the wistful eye,
Nae ray of fame was to be found:
Thou found'st me, like the morning sun
That melts the fogs in limpid air,
The friendless bard and rustic song,
Became alike thy fostering care.

"O! why has worth so short a date?
While villains ripen gray with time!
Must thou, the noble, gen'rous, great,
Fall in bold manhood's hardy prime!
Why did I live to see that day?
A day to me so full of woe?
O! had I met the mortal shaft
Which laid my benefactor low!

"The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And a' that thou hast done for me!"

LINES

Sent to sir John Whiteford, of Whiteford, bart. with the foregoing poem.

Thou, who thy honour as thy God rever'st,
Who, save thy *mind's reproach*, nought earthly fear'st,
To thee this votive offering I impart,
The tearful tribute of a broken heart.
The *friend* thou valued'st, I, the *patron*, lov'd;
His worth, his honour, all the world approv'd.
We'll mourn 'till we too go as he has gone,
And tread the dreary path to that dark world unknown.

TAM O' SHANTER.

A TALE.

Of brownyis and of bogylis full is this buke.
Gawin Douglas.

When chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
An' gettin fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest *Tam o' Shanter*,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,

(Auld Ayr wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonny lasses.)

O *Tam!* hadst thou but been sae wise,
As taen thy ain wife *Kate*'s advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;
That frae November 'till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober;
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
Thou sat as long as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the L—d's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirton Jean 'till Monday.
She prophesy'd that late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in *Doon*;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,
By *Alloway*'s auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthen'd sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae market night,
Tam had got planted unco right;
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, souter *Johnny*,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam loe'd him like a vera brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs an' clatter;
And aye the ale was growing better:
The landlady and *Tam* grew gracious;
Wi' favours, secret, sweet, and precious:
The souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man so happy,
E'en drown'd himself amang the nappy,
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
Kings may be blest, but *Tam* was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow-falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.—
Nae man can tether time or tide;
The hour approaches *Tam* maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blown its last;
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:
That night, a child might understand,
The deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare, *Meg*,
A better never lifted leg,
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares;
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets nightly cry.—

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
And past the birks and meikle stane,
Whare drunken *Charlie* brak's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare *Mungo's* mither hang'd hersel.—
Before him *Doon* pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll;
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;
Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.—

Inspiring bold *John Barleycorn!*
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tipenny, we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae we'll face the devil!—
The swats sae ream'd in *Tammie's* noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle.
But *Maggie* stood right sair astonish'd,
'Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventur'd forward on the light;
And, vow! *Tam* saw an unco sight;
Warlocks and witches in a dance;
Nae cotillion brent new frae *France*,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock bunker in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,
'Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.—
Coffins stood round like open presses;
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantrip slight,
Each in his cauld hand held a light.—
By which heroic *Tam* was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new cutted frae a rape,
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red-rusted;
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack to the heft;

Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As *Tammie* glow'rd, amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious;
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
'Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
And coost her duddies to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark!

Now *Tam*, O *Tam!* had thae been queans
A' plump and strapping, in their teens;
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,
Lowping an' flinging on a crummock,
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But *Tam* kend what was what fu' brawlie.
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie,
That night enlisted in the core,
(Lang after kend on *Carrick* shore;
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear,)
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.—
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft for her wee *Nannie*,
Wi' twa pund Scots, ('twas a' her riches,)
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my muse her wing maun cour;
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r;
To sing how *Nannie* lap and flang,
(A souple jade she was and strang,)
And how *Tam* stood like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een enrich'd;
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,
And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main;
'Till first ae caper, syne anither,
Tam tint his reason a' thegither,
And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"
And in an instant all was dark:
And scarcely had he *Maggie* rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,
When plundering herds assail their byke;
As open pussie's mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;
So *Maggie* runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch skreech and hollow.

Ah, *Tam!* Ah, *Tam!* thou'll get thy fairin!
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy *Kate* awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, *Meg*,
And win the key-stane* of the brig;
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream she dare na cross.
But ere the key-stane they could make,
The fient a tale she had to shake!
For *Nannie*, far above the rest,
Hard upon noble *Maggie* prest,
And flew at *Tam* wi' furious ettle;
But little wist she *Maggie*'s mettle—
Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain grey tail:
The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor *Maggie* scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale of truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
Remember *Tam o' Shanter*'s mare.

ON SEEING A WOUNDED HARE LIMP BY ME, WHICH A FELLOW HAD JUST SHOT AT.

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye;
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bitter little of that life remains:
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains
To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed!
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Oft as by winding Nith, I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate.

---

* It is a well-known fact, that witches, or any evil spirits, have no power to follow a poor wight any farther than the middle of the next running stream.—It may be proper likewise to mention to the benighted traveller, that when he falls in with *bogles*, whatever danger may be in his going forward, there is much more hazard in turning back.

ADDRESS

TO THE SHADE OF THOMSON,

On crowning his bust at Ednam, Roxburghshire, with bays.

While virgin Spring, by Eden's flood,
Unfolds her tender mantle green,
Or pranks the sod in frolic mood,
Or tunes Eolian strains between:

While Summer with a matron grace
Retreats to Dryburgh's cooling shade,
Yet oft, delighted, stops to trace
The progress of the spiky blade:

While Autumn, benefactor kind,
By Tweed erects his aged head,
And sees, with self-approving mind,
Each creature on his bounty fed:

While maniac Winter rages o'er
The hills whence classic Yarrow flows,
Rousing the turbid torrent's roar,
Or sweeping, wild, a waste of snows:

So long, sweet Poet of the year,
Shall bloom that wreath thou well hast won;
While Scotia, with exulting tear,
Proclaims that Thomson was her son.

EPITAPHS.

ON A CELEBRATED RULING ELDER.

Here sowter **** in death does sleep;
To h-ll, if he's gane thither,
Satan, gie him thy gear to keep,
He'll baud it weel thegither.

ON A NOISY POLEMIC.

Below thir stanes lie Jamie's banes:
O death, it's my opinion,
Thou ne'er took such a blath'rin b-tch
Into thy dark dominion!

ON WEE JOHNNY.

Hic jacet wee *Johnnie.*

Whoe'er thou art, O, reader, know,
That death has murder'd Johnnie!
An' here his *body* lies fu' low——
For *saul* he ne'er had ony.

FOR THE AUTHOR'S FATHER.

O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend.

The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
"For ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side*."

FOR R. A. ESQ.

Know thou, O stranger to the fame
Of this much lov'd, much honour'd name!
(For none that knew him need be told)
A warmer heart death ne'er made cold.

FOR G. H. ESQ.

The poor man weeps—here *G——n* sleeps,
Whom canting wretches blam'd:
But with *such as he*, where'er he be,
May I be *sav'd* or *d——d!*

A BARD'S EPITAPH.

Is there a whim-inspired fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And soft'er flame,
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name!

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious, *self-control*
Is wisdom's root.

---

* Goldsmith.

ON THE LATE CAPTAIN GROSE'S

Peregrinations thro' Scotland, collecting the antiquities of that kingdom.

Hear, land o' cakes, and brither Scots,
Frae Maidenkirk to Johnny Groats;
If there's a hole in a' your coats,
I rede you tent it:
A chield's amang you, taking notes,
And, faith, he'll prent it.

If in your bounds ye chance to light
Upon a fine, fat, fodgel wight,
O' stature short, but genius bright,
That's he, mark weel—
And wow! he has an unco slight
O' cauk and keel.

By some auld, houlet-haunted biggin*,
Or kirk deserted by its riggin,
Its ten to ane ye'll find him snug in
Some eldritch part,
Wi' deils, they say, L—d safe's! colleaguin
At some black art.—

Ilk ghaist that haunts auld ha' or chamer,
Ye gipsey-gang that deal in glamor,
And you deep read in hell's black grammar,
Warlocks and witches;
Ye'll quake at his conjuring hammer,
Ye midnight b——es.

Its tauld he was a sodger bred,
And ane wad rather fa'n than fled;
But now he's quat the spurtle-blade,
And dog-skin wallet,
And ta'en the—*antiquarian trade*,
I think they call it.

He has a fouth o' auld nick-nackets:
Rusty airn caps and jinglin jacketst,
Wad haud the Lothians three in tackets,
A towmont gude;
And parritch-pats, and auld saut-backets,
Before the flood.

Of Eve's first fire he has a cinder;
Auld Tubalcain's fire-shool and fender;
That which distinguished the gender
O' Balaam's ass;
A broom-stick o' the witch of Endor,
Weel shod wi' brass.

Forbye, he'll shape you af fu' gleg
The cut of Adam's philibeg;
The knife that nicket Abel's craig
He'll prove you fully,
It was a faulding jocteleg,
Or lang-kail gullie.—

But wad ye see him in his glee,
For meikle glee and fun has he,
Then set him down, and twa or three
Gude fellows wi' him;
And *port, O port!* shine thou a wee,
And then ye'll see him!

Now, by the pow'rs o' verse and prose!
Thou art a dainty chield, O Grose!—
Whae'er o' thee shall ill suppose,
They sair misca' thee;
I'd take the rascal by the nose,
Wad say, shame fa' thee.

* Vide his Antiquities of Scotland.

† Vide his Treatise on ancient armour and weapons.

TO MISS CRUIKSHANKS,

A VERY YOUNG LADY.

Written on the blank leaf of a book, presented to her by the author.

Beauteous rose-bud, young and gay,
Blooming on thy early May,
Never may'st thou, lovely flow'r,
Chilly shrink in sleety show'r!
Never Boreas' hoary path,
Never Eurus' pois'nous breath,
Never baleful stellar lights,
Taint thee with untimely blights!
Never, never reptile thief
Riot on thy virgin leaf!
Nor even Sol too fiercely view
Thy bosom blushing still with dew!

Mayst thou long, sweet crimson gem,
Richly deck thy native stem;
'Till some ev'ning, sober, calm,
Dropping dews, and breathing balm,
While all around the woodland rings,
And ev'ry bird thy requiem sings;
Thou, amid the dirgeful sound,
Shed thy dying honours round,
And resign to parent earth
The loveliest form she e'er gave birth

SONG.

Anna, thy charms my bosom fire,
And waste my soul with care;
But ah! how bootless to admire,
When fated to despair!

Yet in thy presence, lovely fair,
To hope may be forgiv'n;
For sure 'twere impious to despair,
So much in sight of Heav'n.

ON READING IN A NEWSPAPER,

THE DEATH OF JOHN M'LEOD, ESQ.

Brother to a young lady, a particular friend of the author's.

Sad thy tale, thou idle page,
And rueful thy alarms:
Death tears the brother of her love
From Isabella's arms.

Sweetly deckt with pearly dew
The morning rose may blow;
But cold successive noontide blasts
May lay its beauties low.

Fair on Isabella's morn
The sun propitious smil'd;
But, long ere noon, succeeding clouds
Succeeding hopes beguil'd.

Fate oft tears the bosom chords
That nature finest strung:
So Isabella's heart was form'd,
And so that heart was wrung.

Dread Omnipotence, alone,
Can heal the wound he gave;
Can point the brimful grief-worn eyes
To scenes beyond the grave.

Virtue's blossoms there shall blow.
And fear no withering blast;
There Isabella's spotless worth
Shall happy be at last.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF BRUAR WATER*

TO THE NOBLE DUKE OF ATHOLE.

My lord, I know your noble ear
Woe ne'er assails in vain;
Embolden'd thus, I beg you'll hear
Your humble slave complain,
How saucy Phœbus' scorching beams,
In flaming summer-pride,
Dry-withering, waste my foamy streams,
And drink my crystal tide.

The lightly-jumping glowrin trouts,
That thro' my waters play,
If, in their random, wanton spouts,
They near the margin stray;
If, hapless chance! they linger lang,
I'm scorching up so shallow,
They're left the whitening stanes amang,
In gasping death to wallow.

Last day I grat wi' spite and teen,
As poet B**** came by,
That, to a bard I should be seen
Wi' half my channel dry:
A panegyric rhyme, I ween,
Even as I was, he shor'd me;
But had I in my glory been,
He, kneeling, wad ador'd me.

Here, foaming down the skelvy rocks,
In twisting strength I rin;
There, high my boiling torrent smokes,
Wild-roaring o'er a linn:
Enjoying large each spring and well
As nature gave them me,
I am, altho' I say't mysel,
Worth gaun a mile to see.

Would then my noble master please
To grant my highest wishes,
He'll shade my banks wi' tow'ring trees,
And bonnie spreading bushes.
Delighted doubly then, my lord,
You'll wander on my banks,
And listen mony a grateful bird
Return you tuneful thanks.

The sober laverock, warbling wild,
Shall to the skies aspire;
The gowdspink, music's gayest child,
Shall sweetly join the choir:
The blackbird strong, the lintwhite clear,
The mavis mild and mellow;
The robin pensive autumn cheer,
In all her locks of yellow:

This, too, a covert shall ensure,
To shield them from the storm;
And coward maukin sleep secure,
Low in her grassy form:
Here shall the shepherd make his seat,
To weave his crown of flow'rs;
Or find a shelt'ring safe retreat,
From prone descending show'rs.

And here, by sweet endearing stealth,
Shall meet the loving pair,
Despising worlds with all their wealth
As empty idle care:
The flow'rs shall vie in all their charms
The hour of heav'n to grace,
And birks extend their fragrant arms
To screen the dear embrace.

Here haply too, at vernal dawn,
Some musing bard may stray,
And eye the smoking, dewy lawn,
And misty mountain, grey;
Or, by the reaper's nightly beam,
Mild-chequering thro' the trees,
Rave to my darkly dashing stream,
Hoarse-swelling on the breeze.

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,
My lowly banks o'erspread,
And view, deep-bending in the pool,
Their shadows' wat'ry bed!

* Bruar Falls, in Athole, are exceedingly picturesque and beautiful; but their effect is much impaired by the want of trees and shrubs.

Let fragrant birks in woodbines drest
My craggy cliffs adorn;
And, for the little songster's nest,
The close embow'ring thorn.

So may old Scotia's darling hope,
Your little angel band,
Spring, like their fathers, up to prop
Their honour'd native land!
So may thro' Albion's farthest ken,
To social-flowing glasses,
The grace be—"Athole's honest men,
And Athole's bonnie lasses!"

ON SCARING SOME WATER FOWL IN LOCH-TURIT,

A wild scene among the hills of Oughtertyre.

Why, ye tenants of the lake,
For me your wat'ry haunt forsake?
Tell me, fellow-creatures, why
At my presence thus you fly?
Why disturb your social joys,
Parent, filial, kindred ties?—
Common friend to you and me,
Nature's gifts to all are free:
Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,
Busy feed, or wanton lave;
Or, beneath the sheltering rock,
Bide the surging billow's shock.

Conscious, blushing for our race,
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace.
Man, your proud usurping foe,
Would be lord of all below:
Plumes himself in Freedom's pride,
Tyrant stern to all beside.

The eagle, from the cliffy brow,
Marking you his prey below,
In his breast no pity dwells,
Strong necessity compels.
But man, to whom alone is giv'n
A ray direct from pitying heav'n,
Glories in his heart humane—
And creatures for his pleasure slain.

In these savage, liquid plains,
Only known to wand'ring swains,
Where the mossy riv'let strays,
Far from human haunts and ways;
All on nature you depend,
And life's poor season peaceful spend.

Or, if man's superior might
Dare invade your native right,
On the lofty ether borne,
Man with all his pow'rs you scorn;
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,
Other lakes and other springs;
And the foe you cannot brave,
Scorn at least to be his slave.

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL

Over the chimney-piece, in the parlour of the Inn at Kenmore, Taymouth.

Admiring nature in her wildest grace,
These northern scenes with weary feet I trace;
O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,
Th' abodes of covey'd grouse and timid sheep,
My savage journey, curious, I pursue,
'Till fam'd Breadalbane opens to my view.—
The meeting cliffs each deep-sunk glen divides,
The woods, wild scatter'd, clothe their ample sides;
Th' outstretching lake, imbosomed 'mong the hills,
The eye with wonder and amazement fills;
The Tay meand'ring sweet in infant pride,
The palace rising on his verdant side;
The lawns wood-fring'd in nature's native taste;
The hillocks dropt in nature's careless haste;
The arches striding o'er the new-born stream;
The village, glittering in the noontide beam—

* * * * * * *

Poetic ardors in my bosom swell,
Lone wand'ring by the hermit's mossy cell:
The sweeping theatre of hanging woods;
Th' incessant roar of headlong tumbling floods—

* * * * * * *

Here Poesy might wake her heav'n-taught lyre,
And look through nature with creative fire;
Here, to the wrongs of fate half reconcil'd,
Misfortune's lighten'd steps might wander wild;
And disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to sooth her bitter rankling wounds:
Here heart-struck grief might heav'nward stretch her scan,
And injur'd worth forget and pardon man.

* * * * * * *

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL,

Standing by the Fall of Fyers, near Loch-Ness.

Among the heathy hills and ragged woods
The roaring Fyers pours his mossy floods;
'Till full he dashes on the rocky mounds,
Where, thro' a shapeless breach, his stream resounds.
As high in air the bursting torrents flow,
As deep recoiling surges foam below,
Prone down the rock the whitening sheet descends,
And viewless echo's ear, astonish'd, rends.
Dim-seen, through rising mists and ceaseless show'rs,
The hoary cavern, wide-surrounding, low'rs.
Still thro' the gap the struggling river toils,
And still, below, the horrid cauldron boils—

* * * * * * *

ON THE BIRTH.

OF A POSTHUMOUS CHILD,

Born in peculiar circumstances of family distress.

Sweet flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love,
And ward o' mony a pray'r,
What heart o' stane wad thou na move,
Sae helpless, sweet, and fair.

November hirples o'er the lea,
Chill, on thy lovely form;
And gane, alas! the shelt'ring tree,
Should shield thee frae the storm.

May *He* who gives the rain to pour,
And wings the blast to blaw,
Protect thee frae the driving show'r,
The bitter frost and snaw.

May *he*, the friend of woe and want,
Who heals life's various stounds,
Protect and guard the mother plant,
And heal her cruel wounds.

But late she flourish'd, rooted fast,
Fair on the summer morn:
Now feebly bends she, in the blast,
Unshelter'd and forlorn.

Blest be thy bloom, thou lovely gem,
Unscath'd by ruffian hand!
And from thee many a parent stem
Arise to deck our land.

THE WHISTLE.

A BALLAD.

As the authentic *prose* history of the whistle is curious, I shall here give it.—In the train of Ann of Denmark, when she came to Scotland with our James the sixth, there came over also a Danish gentleman of gigantic stature and great prowess, and a matchless champion of Bacchus. He had a little ebony whistle, which, at the commencement of the orgies, he laid on the table; and whoever was last able to blow it, every body else being disabled by the potency of the bottle, was to carry off the whistle as a trophy of victory. The Dane produced credentials of his victories, without a single defeat, at the courts of Copenhagen, Stockholm, Moscow, Warsaw, and several of the petty courts in Germany; and challenged the Scots Bacchanalians to the alternative of trying his prowess, or else of acknowledging their inferiority.—After many overthrows on the part of the Scots, the Dane was encountered by Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton, ancestor of the present worthy baronet of that name; who after three days and three nights' hard contest, left the Scandinavian under the table,

And blew on the whistle his requiem shrill.

Sir Walter, son to Sir Robert before mentioned, afterwards lost the whistle to Walter Riddel of Glenriddel, who had married a sister of Sir Walter's.—On Friday, the 16th of October, 1790, at Friars-Carse, the whistle was once more contended for, as related in the ballad, by the present Sir Robert Lawrie of Maxwelton; Robert Riddel, Esq. of Glenriddel, lineal descendant and representative of Walter Riddel, who won the whistle, and in whose family it had continued; and Alexander Ferguson, Esq. of Craigdarroch, likewise descended of the great Sir Robert; which last gentleman carried off the hard-won honours of the field.

I sing of a whistle, a whistle of worth,
I sing of a whistle, the pride of the north,
Was brought to the court of our good Scottish king,
And long with this whistle all Scotland shall ring.

Old Loda*, still rueing the arm of Fingal,
The god of the bottle sends down from his hall—
'This whistle's your challenge, to Scotland get o'er,
And drink them to hell, sir! or ne'er see me more!"

Old poets have sung, and old chronicles tell,
What champions ventur'd, what champions fell;
The son of great Loda was conqueror still,
And blew on the whistle his requiem shrill.

'Till Robert, the lord of the cairn and the scaur,
Unmatch'd at the bottle, unconquer'd in war,
He drank his poor god-ship as deep as the sea,
No tide of the Baltic e'er drunker than he.

Thus Robert, victorious, the trophy has gain'd;
Which now in his house has for ages remain'd;
'Till three noble chieftains, and all of his blood,
The jovial contest again have renew'd.

Three joyous good fellows, with hearts clear of flaw;
Craigdarroch, so famous for wit, worth, and law;
And trusty Glenriddel, so skill'd in old coins;
And gallant Sir Robert, deep-read in old wines.

Craigdarroch began, with a tongue smooth as oil,
Desiring Glenriddel to yield up the spoil;
Or else he would muster the heads of the clan,
And once more, in claret, try which was the man.

"By the gods of the ancients!" Glenriddel replies,
"Before I surrender so glorious a prize,
"I'll conjure the ghost of the great Rorie More†,
"And bumper his horn with him twenty times o'er."

Sir Robert, a soldier, no speech would pretend,
But he ne'er turn'd his back on his foe—or his friend,
Said, toss down the whistle, the prize of the field,
And, knee-deep in claret, he'd die, or he'd yield.

---

* See Ossian's Carie-thura.

† See Johnson's tour to the Hebrides.

To the board of Glenriddel our heroes repair,
So noted for drowning of sorrow and care;
But for wine and for welcome not more known to fame,
Than the sense, wit, and taste of a sweet lovely dame.

A bard was selected to witness the fray,
And tell future ages the feats of the day;
A bard who detested all sadness and spleen,
And wish'd that Parnassus a vineyard had been.

The dinner being over, the claret they ply,
And ev'ry new cork is a new spring of joy;
In the bands of old friendship and kindred so set,
And the bands grew the tighter the more they were wet.

Gay pleasure ran riot as bumpers ran o'er;
Bright Phœbus ne'er witness'd so joyous a core,
And vow'd that to leave them he was quite forlorn,
'Till Cynthia hinted he'd see them next morn.

Six bottles a-piece had well wore out the night,
When gallant Sir Robert, to finish the fight,
Turn'd o'er in one bumper a bottle of red,
And swore 'twas the way that their ancestor did.

Then worthy Grenriddel, so cautious and sage,
No longer the warfare, ungodly, would wage;
A high-ruling elder to wallow in wine!
He left the foul business to folks less divine.

The gallant Sir Robert fought hard to the end;
But who can with fate and quart bumpers contend?
Though fate said—a hero should perish in light;
So uprose bright Phœbus-and down fell the knight.

Next uprose our bard, like a prophet in drink:—
"Craigdarroch, thoul't soar when creation shall sink!
But if thou would flourish immortal in rhyme,
Come—one bottle more—and have at the sublime!

"Thy line, that have struggled for freedom with Bruce,
Shall heroes and patriots ever produce:
So thine be the laurel, and mine be the bay;
The field thou hast won, by yon bright god of day!"

SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET*.

Auld Nibor,
I'm three times, doubly, o'er your debtor,
For your auld-farrent, frien'ly letter;
Tho' I maun say't, I doubt ye flatter,
Ye speak sae fair;
For my puir, silly, rhymin' clatter
Some less maun ser.

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle;
Lang may your elbuck jink and diddle,
To cheer you thro' the weary widdle
O' war'ly cares,
'Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle
Your auld, gray hairs.

But, *Davie*, lad, I'm red ye're glaikit;
I'm tauld the muse ye hae negleckit;
An' gif its sae, ye sud be licket
Until ye fyke;
Sic hauns as you sud ne'er be faiket,
Be hain't wha like.

For me, I'm on Parnassus brink,
Rivin the words to gar them clink;
Whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink,
Wi' jads or masons;
An' whyles, but ay owre late, I think
Braw sober lessons.

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
Commen' me to the bardie clan;
Except it be some idle plan
O' rhymin' clink,
The devil-haet, that I sud ban,
They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin',
Nae cares to gie us joy or grievin':
But just the pouchie put the nieve in,
An' while ought's there,
Then hiltie, skiltie, we gae scrivin',
An' fash nae mair.

Leeze me on rhyme! it's ay a treasure,
My chief, amaist my only pleasure,
At hame, a-fiel, at wark or leisure,
The muse, poor hizzie!
Tho' rough an' raploch be her measure,
She's seldom lazy.

Haud to the muse, my dainty Davie:
The warl' may play you monie a shavie;
But for the muse, she'll never leave ye,
Tho' e'er sae puir,
Na, even tho' limpan wi' the spavie
Frae door to door.

* This is prefixed to the poems of David Sillar, published at Kilmarnock, 1789, and has not before appeared in our author's printed poems.

APPENDIX.

IT may gratify curiosity to know some particulars of the history of the preceding poems, on which the celebrity of our bard has been hitherto founded; and with this view the following extract is made from a letter of Gilbert Burns, the brother of our poet, and his friend and confidant from his earliest years.

Dear sir, *Mossgill, 2d April*, 1798.

Your letter of the 14th of March I received in due course, but from the hurry of the season have been hitherto hindered from answering it. I will now try to give you what satisfaction I can in regard to the particulars you mention. I cannot pretend to be very accurate in respect to the dates of the poems, but none of them, except *Winter, a Dirge*, (which was a juvenile production,) *The Death and Dying Words of poor Maillie*, and some of the songs, were composed before the year 1784. The circumstances of the poor sheep were pretty much as he has described them. He had, partly by way of frolic, bought a ewe and two lambs from a neighbour, and she was tethered in a field adjoining the house at Lochlie. He and I were going out, with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us, at mid-day; when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking, awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch. Robert was much tickled with *Hugo's* appearance and postures on the occasion. Poor Maillie was set to rights, and when we returned from the plough in the evening, he repeated to me her *Death and dying Words* pretty much in the way they now stand.

Among the earliest of his poems was the *Epistle to Davie*. Robert often composed without any regular plan. When any thing made a strong impression on his mind, so as to rouse it to poetic exertion, he would give way to the impulse, and embody the thought in rhyme. If he hit on two or three stanzas to please him, he would then think of proper introductory, connecting, and concluding stanzas; hence the middle of a poem was often first produced. It was, I think, in summer 1784, when, in the interval of harder labour, he and I were weeding in the garden (kail-yard), that he repeated to me the principal part of this epistle. I believe the first idea of Robert's becoming an author was started on this occasion. I was much pleased with the epistle, and said to him I was of opinion it would bear being printed, and that it would be well received by people of taste; that I thought it at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scotch poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression, but here, there was a strain of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language scarcely seemed affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet; that besides there was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging. Robert seemed very well pleased with my criticism, and we talked of sending it to some magazine; but as this plan afforded no opportunity of knowing how it would take, the idea was dropped.

It was, I think, in the winter following, as we were going together with carts for coal to the family fire (and I could yet point out the particular spot), that the author first repeated to me the *Address to the Deil*. The curious idea of such an address was suggested to him by running over in his mind, the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have from various quarters of this august personage. *Death and Doctor Hornbook*, though not published in the Kilmarnock edition, was produced early in the year 1785. The schoolmaster of Tarbolton parish, to eke up the scanty subsistence allowed to that useful class of men, had set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised, that "Advice would be given in common disorders at the shop gratis." Robert was at a mason-meeting in Tarbolton, when the *Dominie* unfortunately made too ostentatious a display of his medical skill. As he parted in the evening from this mixture of pedantry and physic, at the place where he describes his meeting with Death, one of those floating ideas of apparition he mentions in his letter to Dr. Moore, crossed his mind; this set him to work for the rest of the way home. These circumstances he related when he repeated the verses to me next

afternoon, as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me. The *Epistle to John Lapraik* was produced exactly on the occasion described by the author. He says in that poem, *On fasten-e'en we had a rockin*, (p. 279.) I believe he has omitted the word *rocking* in the glossary. It is a term derived from those primitive times, when the country-women employed their spare hours in spinning on the rock, or distaff. This simple implement is a very portable one, and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house; hence the phrase of *going a rocking*, or *with the rock*. As the connexion the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the rock gave place to the spinning-wheel, the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talk of going with their rocks as well as women.

It was at one of these *rockings* at our house, when we had twelve or fifteen young people with their *rocks*, that Lapraik's song, beginning—"When I upon thy bosom lean," was sung, and we were informed who was the author. Upon this Robert wrote his first epistle to Lapraik, and his second in reply to his answer. The verses to the *Mouse* and *Mountain-Daisy* were composed on the occasions mentioned, and while the author was holding the plough; I could point out the particular spot where each was composed. Holding the plough was a favourite situation with Robert for poetic compositions, and some of his best verses were produced while he was at that exercise. Several of the poems were produced for the purpose of bringing forward some favourite sentiment of the author. He used to remark to me, that he could not well conceive a more mortifying picture of human life, than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how this sentiment might be brought forward, the elegy *Man was made to mourn*, was composed. Robert had frequently remarked to me, that he thought that there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, "Let us worship God," used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for the *Cotter's Saturday Night*. The hint of the plan, and title of the poem, were taken from Fergusson's *Farmer's Ingle*. When Robert had not some pleasure in view in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together when the weather was favourable, on the Sunday afternoons, (those precious breathing-times to the labouring part of the community,) and enjoyed such Sundays as would make one regret to see their number abridged. It was in one of these walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the author repeat the *Cotter's Saturday Night*. I do not recollect to have read or heard any thing by which I was more highly *electrified*. The fifth and sixth stanzas, and the eighteenth, thrilled with peculiar extasy through my soul. I mention this to you, that you may see what hit the taste of unlettered criticism. I should be glad to know, if the enlightened mind and refined taste of Mr. Roscoe, who has borne such honourable testimony to this poem, agrees with me in the selection. Fergusson, in his *Hallow Fair* of Edinburgh, I believe, likewise furnished a hint of the title and plan of the *Holy Fair*. The farcical scene the poet there describes was often a favourite field of his observation, and the most of the incidents he mentions had actually passed before his eyes. It is scarcely necessary to mention, that the *Lament* was composed on that unfortunate passage in his matrimonial history, which I have mentioned in my letter to Mrs. Dunlop, after the first distraction of his feelings had a little subsided. *The Tale of Two Dogs* was composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken.—Robert had a dog, which he called *Luath*, that was a great favourite. The dog had been killed by the wanton cruelty of some person the night before my father's death. Robert said to me, that he should like to confer such immortality as he could bestow upon his old friend *Luath*, and that he had a great mind to introduce something into the book under the title of *Stanzas to the Memory of a quadruped Friend;* but this plan was given up for the *Tale* as it now stands. *Cæsar* was merely the creature of the poet's imagination, created for the purpose of holding chat with his favourite *Luath*. The first time Robert heard the spinnet played upon, was at the house of Dr. Lawrie, then minister of the parish of Loudon, now in Glasgow, having given up the parish in favour of his son. Dr. Lawrie has several daughters: one of them played; the father and mother led down the dance; the rest of the sisters, the brother, the poet, and the other guests, mixed in it. It was a delightful family scene for our poet, then lately introduced to the world. His mind was roused to a poetic enthusiasm, and the stanzas, p. 265, were left in the room where he slept. It was to Dr. Lawrie that Dr. Blacklock's letter was addressed, which my brother, in his letter to Dr. Moore, mentions as the reason of his going to Edinburgh.

When my father *feued* his little property near Alloway-Kirk, the wall of the churchyard had gone to ruin, and cattle had free liberty of pasturing in it. My father, with two or three other neighbours, joined in an application to the town council of Ayr, who were superiors of the adjoining land, for liberty to rebuild it, and raised by subscription a sum for inclosing this ancient cemetery with a wall; hence he came to consider it as his burial place, and we learned that reverence for it, people generally have for the burial-place of their ancestors. My brother was living in Elisland, when Captain Grose, on his peregrinations through Scotland, staid some time at Carse-house, in the neighbourhood, with Captain Robert Riddel, of Glen-Riddel, a particular friend of my brother's. The antiquarian and the poet were "Unco pack and thick thegither." Robert requested of Captain Grose, when he should come to Ayrshire, that he would make a drawing of Alloway-Kirk, as it was the burial-place of his father, and where he himself had a sort of claim to lay down his bones, when they should be no longer serviceable to him; and added, by way of encouragement, that it was the scene of many a good story of witches and appari-

tions, of which he knew the captain was very fond. The captain agreed to the request, provided the poet would furnish a witch-story, to be printed along with it. *Tam o' Shanter* was produced on this occasion, and was first published in *Grose's Antiquities of Scotland.*

This poem is founded on a traditional story. The leading circumstances of a man riding home very late from Ayr, in a stormy night, his seeing a light in Alloway-Kirk, his having the curiosity to look in, his seeing a dance of witches, with the devil playing on the bag-pipe to them, the scanty covering of one of the witches, which made him so far forget himself as to cry—*Weel laupan short sark*—with the melancholy catastrophe of the piece; is all a true story, that can be well attested by many respectable old people in that neighbourhood.

I do not at present recollect any circumstances respecting the other poems, that could be at all interesting; even some of those I have mentioned, I am afraid, may appear trifling enough, but you will only make use of what appears to you of consequence.

The following poems in the first Edinburgh edition, were not in that published in Kilmarnock. *Death and Dr. Hornbook; The Brigs of Ayr; The Calf;* (the poet had been with Mr. Gavin Hamilton in the morning, who said jocularly to him when he was going to church, in allusion to the injunction of some parents to their children, that he must be sure to bring him a note of the sermon at mid-day; this address to the reverend gentleman on his text was accordingly produced;) *The Ordination; The Address to the Unco Guid; Tam Samson's Elegy; A Winter Night; Stanzas on the same occasion as the preceding Prayer; Verses left at a Reverend Friend's house; The first Psalm; Prayer under the pressure of violent Anguish; The first six Verses of the nineticth Psalm; Verses to Miss Logan, with Beattie's Poems; To a Haggis; Address to Edinburgh; John Barleycorn; When Guilford guid; Behind yon hills where Stinchar flows; Green grow the Rashes; Again rejoicing Nature sees; The gloomy Night; No Churchman am I.*

If you have never seen the first edition, it will perhaps not be amiss to transcribe the preface, that you may see the manner in which the poet made his first awe-struck approach to the bar of public judgment.

Preface to the first edition of Burns' Poems, published at Kilmarnock.

"The following trifles are not the production of the poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and, perhaps, amid the elegancies and idleness of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these and other celebrated names, their countrymen, are, at least in their original language, *A fountain shut up, and a book sealed.* Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulses of the softer passions, it was not till very lately, that the applause, perhaps the partiality, of friendship, weakened his vanity so far as to make him think any thing of his worth showing; and none of the following works were composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind—these were his motives for courting the muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward.

"Now that he appears in the public character of an author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless bard, shrinks aghast at the thought of being branded as—an impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and, because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel Scotch rhymes together, looking upon himself as a poet of no small consequence forsooth!

"It is an observation of that celebrated poet, Shenstone, whose divine elegies do honour to our language, our nation, and our species, that '*Humility* has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!' If any critic catches at the word *genius*, the author tells him once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possest of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done, would be a manœuvre below the worst character, which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him. But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares, that, even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame than for servile imitation.

"To his subscribers, the author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the bard, conscious how much he owes to benevolence and friendship, for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom—to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the learned and the polite, who may honour him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for education and circumstances of life; but if, after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of dulness and nonsense, let him be done by as he would in that case do by others—let him be condemned, without mercy, to contempt and oblivion."

* * * *

I am, dear sir, your most obedient humble servant, GILBERT BURNS.

Dr. Currie, Liverpool.

To this history of the poems which are contained in this volume, it may be added, that our author appears to have made little alteration in them after their original composition, except in some few instances where considerable additions have been introduced. After he had attracted the notice of the public by his first edition, various criticisms were offered him on the peculiarities of his style, as well as of his sentiments, and some of these, which remain among his manuscripts, are by persons of great taste and judgment. Some few of these criticisms he adopted, but the far greater part he rejected; and, though something has by this means been lost in point of delicacy and correctness, yet a deeper impression is left of the strength and originality of his genius. The firmness of our poet's character, arising from a just confidence in his own powers, may, in part, explain his tenaciousness of his peculiar expressions; but it may be in some degree accounted for also, by the circumstances under which the poems were composed. Burns did not, like men of genius born under happier auspices, retire, in the moment of inspiration, to the silence and solitude of his study, and commit his verses to paper as they arranged themselves in his mind. Fortune did not afford him this indulgence. It was during the toils of daily labour that his fancy exerted itself; the muse, as he himself informs us, found him at the plough. In this situation, it was necessary to fix his verses on his memory, and it was often many days, nay weeks, after a poem was finished, before it was written down. During all this time, by frequent repetition, the association between the thought and the expression was confirmed, and the impartiality of taste with which written language is reviewed and retouched after it has faded on the memory, could not in such instances be exerted. The original manuscripts of many of his poems are preserved, and they differ in nothing material from the last printed edition. Some few variations may be noticed.

1. In *The Author's earnest Cry and Prayer*, after the stanza, p. 235, beginning

Erskine, a spunkie Norland Billie,

there appears, in his book of manuscripts, the following:

Thee, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented,
If bardies e'er are represented,
I ken if that your sword were wanted
Ye'd lend your hand,
But when there's ought to say anent it,
Ye're at a stand.

Sodger Hugh is evidently the present earl of Eglinton, then colonel Montgomery of Coilsfield, and representing in parliament the county of Ayr. Why this was left out in printing does not appear. The noble earl will not be sorry to see this notice of him, familiar though it be, by a bard, whose genius he admired, and whose fate he lamented.

2. In *The Address to the Deil*, the second stanza, in page 244, ran originally thus:

Lang syne in Eden's happy scene,
When strappin' Adam's days were green,
And Eve was like my bonnie Jean,
My dearest part,
A dancin, sweet, young, handsome quean,
Wi' guiltless heart.

In *The Elegy on poor Maillie*, p. 246, the stanza, beginning

She was nae get o' moorland tips,

was, at first, as follows:

She was nae get o' runted rams,
Wi' woo' like goats, and legs like trams,
She was the flower o' Fairlee lambs,
A famous breed,
Now Robin, greetin, chows the hams
O' Maillie dead.

It were a pity that the Fairlee lambs should lose the honour once intended them.

3. But the chief variations are found in the poems introduced, for the first time, in the edition in two volumes small octavo, published in 1792. Of the poem *Written in Friars-Carse Hermitage*, there are several editions, and one of these* has nothing in common with the printed poem but the four first lines. The poem that is published, which was his second effort on the subject, received considerable alterations in printing.

Instead of the six lines beginning

Say man's true genuine estimate,

in manuscript the following are inserted:

Say the criterion of their fate,
Th' important query of their state,
Is not, art thou high or low?
Did thy fortune ebb or flow?
Wert thou cottager, or king?
Prince, or peasant? no such thing.

4. The *Epistle to R. G. of F. Esq.* that, is to *R. Graham, of Fintra, Esq.* also underwent considerable alterations, as may be collected from the volume of correspondence. This stile of poetry was new to our poet, and, though he was fitted to excel in it, it cost him more trouble than his Scottish poetry. On the contrary, *Tam o' Shanter* seems to have issued perfect from the author's brain. The only considerable alteration made on reflection, is the omission of four lines, which had been inserted after the poem was finished, at the end of the dreadful catalogue of the articles found on the "haly table," and which appeared

* This is given in the Correspondence.

in the first edition of the poem, printed separately. They came after the second line, page 287,

Which even to name would be unlawfu',

and are as follows:

Three lawyers' tongues turned inside out,
Wi' lies seamed like a beggar's clout,
And priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay stinking vile in every neuk.

These lines, which, independent of other objections, interrupt and destroy the emotions of terror which the preceding description had excited, were very properly left out of the printed collection, by the advice of Mr. Frazer Tytler; to which Burns seems to have paid much deference*.

* These four lines have been inadvertently replaced in the copy of *Tam o' Shanter*, published in the first volume of the "Poetry Original and Selected," of Brash and Reid, of Glasgow; and to this circumstance is owing their being noticed here. As our poet deliberately rejected them, it is hoped that no future printer will insert them.

5. The *Address to the Shade of Thomson*, page 288, began in the first manuscript copy in the following manner:

While cold-eyed spring, a virgin coy,
Unfolds her verdant mantle sweet,
Or pranks the sod in frolic joy,
A carpet for her youthful feet:
While summer, with a matron's grace,
Walks stately in the cooling shade,
And oft delighted loves to trace
The progress of the spiky blade:
While autumn, benefactor kind,
With age's hoary honours clad,
Surveys, with self-approving mind,
Each creature on his bounty fed, &c.

By the alteration in the printed poem, it may be questioned whether the poetry is much improved; the poet however has found means to introduce the shades of Dryburgh, the residence of the earl of Buchan, at whose request these verses were written.

These observations might be extended, but what are already offered will satisfy curiosity, and there is nothing of any importance that could be added.

IN the beginning of the year 1787, another work had commenced at Edinburgh, entitled, *The Scots Musical Museum*, conducted by Mr. James Johnson; the object of which was to unite the songs and the music of Scotland in one general collection. The first volume of this work appeared in May, 1787, when our poet was in Edinburgh; and in it appeared one of his printed songs, to the tune of, *Green grow the rashes*, beginning "There's nought but care on every hand." He appears also to have furnished from his MSS. the last song in that volume, which was an early production, and not thought by himself worthy of a place in his works. The second volume appeared in the spring of 1788, and contained several original songs of Burns; who also contributed liberally to the third, fourth, and fifth volumes, the last of which did not appear till after his death. In his communications to Mr. Johnson, to which his name was not in general affixed, our bard was less careful than in his compositions for the greater work of Mr. Thomson. Several of them he never intended to acknowledge, and others, printed in the Museum, were found somewhat altered afterwards among his manuscripts. In the selection which follows, attention has been paid to the wishes of the author as far as they are known. The printed songs have been compared with the MSS. and the last corrections have been uniformly inserted. The reader will probably think many of the songs which follow, among the finest productions of his muse.

THE BIRKS OF ABERFELDY.

Bonnie lassie, will ye go, will ye go, will ye go,
Bonnie lassie, will ye go to the birks of Aberfeldy?

Now simmer blinks on flowery braes,
And o'er the crystal streamlet plays,
Come let us spend the lightsome days,
In the birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

While o'er their heads the hazels hing,
The little birdies blythely sing,
Or lightly flit on wanton wing
In the birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

The braes ascend like lofty wa's,
The foaming stream deep-roaring fa's,
O'er-hung wi' fragrant spreading shaws,
The birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

The hoary cliffs are crown'd wi' flowers,
White o'er the linns the burnie pours,
And rising weets wi' misty showers
The birks of Aberfeldy.
Bonnie lassie, &c.

Let fortune's gifts at random flee,
They ne'er shall draw a wish frae me,
Supremely blest wi' love and thee
In the birks of Aberfeldy.
*Bonnie lassie, &c.**

STAY, MY CHARMER, CAN YOU LEAVE ME?

Tune, "*An Gille dubh ciar dhubh.*"

Stay, my charmer, can you leave me?
Cruel, cruel, to deceive me!
Well you know how much you grieve me;
Cruel charmer, can you go!
Cruel charmer, can you go!

By my love so ill requited;
By the faith you fondly plighted;
By the pangs of lovers slighted;
Do not, do not leave me so!
Do not, do not leave me so!

STRATHALLAN'S LAMENT.

Thickest night o'erhang my dwelling!
Howling tempests o'er me rave!
Turbid torrents, wintry swelling,
Still surround my lonely cave!

Crystal streamlets gently flowing,
Busy haunts of base mankind,
Western breezes softly blowing,
Suit not my distracted mind.

In the cause of right engaged,
Wrongs injurious to redress,
Honour's war we strongly waged,
But the heavens deny'd success.

Ruin's wheel has driven o'er us,
Not a hope that dare attend,
The wide world is all before us—
But a world without a friend!*

THE YOUNG HIGHLAND ROVER.

Tune, "*Morag.*"

Loud blaw the frosty breezes,
The snaws the mountains cover;
Like winter on me seizes,
Since my young highland rover
Far wanders nations over.
Where'er he go, where'er he stray,
May heaven be his warden;
Return him safe to fair Strathspey,
And bonnie Castle-Gordon!

The trees now naked groaning,
Shall soon wi' leaves be hinging,
The birdies dowie moaning,
Shall a' be blythely singing,
And every flower be springing.
Sae I'll rejoice the lee-lang day,
When by his mighty warden
My youth's return'd to fair Strathspey,
And bonnie Castle-Gordon†.

RAVING WINDS AROUND HER BLOWING.

Tune, "*M'Grigor of Rero's Lament.*"

Raving winds around her blowing,
Yellow leaves the woodlands strowing,
By a river hoarsely roaring,
Isabella stray'd deploring.
"Farewell, hours that late did measure
Sunshine days of joy and pleasure;
Hail, thou gloomy night of sorrow,
Cheerless night that knows no morrow.

"O'er the past too fondly wandering,
On the hopeless future pondering;
Chilly grief my life-blood freezes,
Fell despair my fancy seizes.

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* This is written in the same measure as the *Birks of Abergeldie*, an old Scottish song, from which nothing is borrowed but the chorus.

* Strathallan, it is presumed, was one of the followers of the young chevalier, and is supposed to be lying concealed in some cave of the Highlands, after the battle of Culloden. This song was written before the year 1788. E.

† The young highland rover, is supposed to be the young chevalier, Prince Charles-Edward. E.

Life, thou soul of every blessing,
Load to misery most distressing,
O how gladly I'd resign thee,
And to dark oblivion join thee* !"

MUSING ON THE ROARING OCEAN.

Tune, "*Druimion dubh.*"

Musing on the roaring ocean,
Which divides my love and me;
Wearying heaven in warm devotion,
For his weal where'er he be.

Hope and fear's alternate billow
Yielding late to nature's law,
Whisp'ring spirits round my pillow
Talk of him that's far awa.

Ye whom sorrow never wounded,
Ye who never shed a tear,
Care-untroubled, joy-surrounded,
Gaudy day to you is dear.

Gentle night, do thou befriend me;
Downy sleep, the curtain draw;
Spirits kind, again attend me,
Talk of him that's far awa!

BLYTHE WAS SHE.

Blythe, blythe and merry was she,
Blythe was she but and ben:
Blythe by the banks of Ern,
And blythe in Glenturit glen.

By Oughtertyre grows the aik,
On Yarrow banks, the birken shaw;
But Phemie was a bonnier lass
Than braes o' Yarrow ever saw.
Blythe, &c.

Her looks were like a flow'r in May
Her smile was like a simmer morn;
She tripped by the banks of Ern,
As light's a bird upon a thorn.
Blythe, &c.

Her bonnie face it was as meek
As ony lamb upon a lee;
The evening sun was ne'er sae sweet
As was the blink o' Phemie's e'e.
Blythe, &c.

The Highland hills I've wander'd wide,
And o'er the Lowlands I hae been;
But Phemie was the blythest lass
That ever trode the dewy green.
Blythe, &c.

* The occasion on which this poem was written is unknown to the editor. It is an early composition. E.

A ROSE-BUD BY MY EARLY WALK.

A rose-bud by my early walk,
Adown a corn-inclosed bawk,
Sae gently bent its thorny stalk,
All on a dewy morning.

Ere twice the shades o' dawn are fled,
In a' its crimson glory spread,
And drooping rich the dewy head,
It scents the early morning.

Within the bush, her covert nest
A little linnet fondly prest,
The dew sat chilly on her breast
Sae early in the morning.

She soon shall see her tender brood,
The pride, the pleasure o' the wood,
Amang the fresh green leaves bedew'd,
Awake the early morning.

So thou, dear bird, young Jeany fair,
On trembling strings or vocal air,
Shall sweetly pay the tender care
That tents thy early morning.

So thou, sweet rose-bud, young and gay,
Shalt beauteous blaze upon the day,
And bless the parent's evening ray
That watch'd thy early morning*.

WHERE BRAVING ANGRY WINTER'S STORMS.

Tune, "*N. Gow's Lamentation for Abercairny.*"

Where, braving angry winter's storms,
The lofty Ochels rise,
Far in their shade my Peggy's charms
First blest my wondering eyes.
As one who, by some savage stream,
A lonely gem surveys,
Astonish'd doubly marks it beam
With art's most polish'd blaze.

Blest be the wild, sequester'd shade,
And blest the day and hour,
Where Peggy's charms I first survey'd,
When first I felt their pow'r!
The tyrant death with grim controul
May seize my fleeting breath;
But tearing Peggy from my soul
Must be a stronger death.

* This song was written during the winter of 1787. Miss J. C. daughter of a friend of the bard, is the heroine.

TIBBIE, I HAE SEEN THE DAY.

Tune, "*Invercald's Reel.*"

O Tibbie, I hae seen the day,
You would na been sae shy;
For laik o' gear ye lightly me,
But trowth, I care na by.

Yestreen I met you on the moor,
Ye spak na, but gaed by like stoure;
Ye geek at me because I'm poor,
But fient a hair care I.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

I doubt na, lass, but ye may think,
Because ye hae the name o' clink,
That ye can please me at a wink,
Whene'er ye like to try.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

But sorrow tak him that's sae mean,
Altho' his pouch o' coin were clean,
Wha follows ony saucy queen
That looks sae proud and high.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

Altho' a lad were e'er sae smart,
If that he want the yellow dirt,
Ye'll cast your head anither airt,
And answer him fu' dry.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

But if he hae the name o' gear,
Ye'll fasten to him like a brier,
Tho' hardly he for sense or lear,
Be better than the kye.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak my advice,
Your daddie's gear maks you sae nice;
The deil a ane wad spier your price,
Were ye as poor as I.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

There lives a lass in yonder park,
I wauld na gie her in her sark,
For thee wi' a' thy thousan' mark;
Ye need na look sae high.
O Tibbie, I hae, &c.

CLARINDA.

Clarinda, mistress of my soul,
The measur'd time is run!
The wretch beneath the dreary pole,
So marks his latest sun.

To what dark cave of frozen night
Shall poor Sylvander hie;
Depriv'd of thee, his life and light,
The sun of all his joy?

We part—but by these precious drops,
That fill thy lovely eyes!
No other light shall guide my steps,
'Till thy bright beams arise.

She, the fair sun of all her sex,
Has blest my glorious day:
And shall a glimmering planet fix
My worship to its ray?

THE DAY RETURNS, MY BOSOM BURNS.

Tune, "*Seventh of November.*"

The day returns, my bosom burns,
The blissful day we twa did meet,
Tho' winter wild in tempest toil'd,
Ne'er summer-sun was half sae sweet.
Than a' the pride that loads the tide,
And crosses o'er the sultry line;
Than kingly robes, than crowns and globes,
Heaven gave me more, it made thee mine.

While day and night can bring delight,
Or nature aught of pleasure give!
While joys above, my mind can move,
For thee, and thee alone, I live!
When that grim foe of life below
Comes in between to make us part;
The iron hand that breaks our band,
It breaks my bliss—it breaks my heart.

THE LAZY MIST.

The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill,
Concealing the course of the dark winding rill;
How languid the scenes, late so sprightly, appear,
As autumn to winter resigns the pale year.
The forests are leafless, the meadows are brown,
And all the gay foppery of summer is flown:
Apart let me wander, apart let me muse,
How quick time is flying, how keen fate pursues;
How long I have liv'd—but how much liv'd in vain;
How little of life's scanty span may remain;
What aspects old time, in his progress, has worn;
What ties, cruel fate in my bosom has torn.
How foolish, or worse, 'till our summit is gain'd!
And downward, how weaken'd, how darken'd, how pain'd!
This life's not worth having with all it can give,
For something beyond it poor man sure must live.

O, WERE I ON PARNASSUS' HILL.

Tune, "*My love is lost to me.*"

O were I on Parnassus' hill!
Or had of Helicon my fill;
That I might catch poetic skill,
To sing how dear I love thee.

But Nith maun be my muse's well,
My muse maun be thy bonnie sell;
On Corsincon I'll glowr and spell,
And write how dear I love thee.

Then come, sweet muse, inspire my lay!
For a' the lee-lang simmer's day
I coudna sing, I coudna say,
How much, how dear, I love thee.
I see thee dancing o'er the green,
Thy waist sae jimp, thy limbs sae clean,
Thy tempting lips, thy roguish e'en—
By heaven and earth I love thee!

By night, by day, a-field, at hame,
The thoughts o' thee my breast inflame;
And aye I muse and sing thy name,
I only live to love thee.
Tho' I were doom'd to wander on,
Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,
Till my last, weary sand was run;
Till then—and then I love thee.

I LOVE MY JEAN.

Tune, "*Miss Admiral Gordon's Strathspey.*"

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonnie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best:
There wild-woods grow, and rivers row,
And mony a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair;
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonnie flower, that springs
By fountain, shaw, or green,
There's not a bonnie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.

THE BRAES O' BALLOCHMYLE.

The Catrine woods were yellow seen,
The flowers decay'd on Catrine lee*,
Nae lav'rock sang on hillock green,
But nature sicken'd on the e'e.
Thro' faded groves Maria sang,
Hersel in beauty's bloom the while,
And aye the wild-wood echoes rang,
Fareweel the braes o' Ballochmyle.

Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,
Again ye'll flourish fresh and fair;
Ye birdies dumb, in with'ring bowers,
Again ye'll charm the vocal air.
But here, alas! for me, nae mair
Shall birdie charm, or floweret smile;
Fareweel the bonnie banks of Ayr,
Fareweel, fareweel! sweet Ballochmyle!

WILLIE BREW'D A PECK O' MAUT.

O Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,
And Rob and Allan cam to see;
Three blyther hearts, that lee-lang night,
Ye wad na find in Christendie.

We are na fou, we're nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our e'e;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys I trow are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be!
We are na fou, &c.

It is the moon, I ken her horn,
That's blinkin in the lift sae hie;
She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,
But by my sooth she'll wait a wee!
We are na fou, &c.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold, coward loun is he!
Wha first beside his chair shall fa',
He is the king among us three!
*We are na fou, &c.**

THE BLUE-EYED LASSIE.

I gaed a waefu' gate, yestreen,
A gate, I fear, I'll dearly rue;
I gat my death frae twa sweet e'en,
Twa lovely e'en o' bonnie blue.
'Twas not her golden ringlets bright;
Her lips like roses, wat wi' dew,
Her heaving bosom, lily-white—
It was her e'en sae bonnie blue.

She talk'd, she smil'd, my heart she wyl'd,
She charm'd my soul I wist na how;
And ay the stound, the deadly wound,
Cam frae her e'en sae bonnie blue.

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* Catrine, in Ayrshire, the seat of Dugald Stewart, Esq. professor of moral philosophy in the university of Edinburgh. Ballochmyle, formerly the seat of Sir John Whitefoord, now of —— Alexander, Esq. E.

* Willie, who "brew'd a peck o' maut," was Mr. William Nicol; and Rob and Allan, were our poet and his friend Allan Masterton. This meeting took place at *Laggan*, a farm purchased by Mr. Nicol, in Nithsdale, on the recommendation of our bard. These three honest fellows—all men of uncommon talents, are now all *under the turf.* (1799.) E.

But spare to speak, and spare to speed;
She'll aiblins listen to my vow:
Should she refuse, I'll lay my dead
To her twa e'en sae bonnie blue*.

THE BANKS OF NITH.

Tune—"*Robie Donna Gorach.*"

The Thames flows proudly to the sea,
Where royal cities stately stand;
But sweeter flows the Nith, to me,
Where Cummins anoe had high command:
When shall I see that honour'd land,
That wanding stream I love so dear!
Must wayward fortune's adverse hand
For ever, ever keep me here!

How lovely, Nith, thy fruitful vales,
Where spreading hawthorns gayly bloom;
How sweetly wind thy sloping dales,
Where lambkins wanton thro' the broom!
Tho' wandering now, must be my doom,
Far from thy bonnie banks and braes,
May there my latest hours consume,
Amang the friends of early days!

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO.

John Anderson my jo, John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your brow is bald, John,
Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And mony a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go;
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson my jo†.

TAM GLEN.

My heart is a breaking, dear Tittie,
Some counsel unto me come len';
To anger them a' is a pity,
But what will I do wi' Tam Glen.

Ye'll blear out a' your e'en, John, and why should you do so?
Gang sooner to your bed at e'en, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, when nature first began
To try her canny hand, John, her master-work was *man;*
And you amang them a', John, sae trig frae tap to toe,
She prov'd to be nae journey-work, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, ye were my first conceit,
And ye need nae think it strange, John, tho' I ca' ye trim and neat;
Tho' some folk say ye're auld, John, I never think ye so,
But I think ye're aye the same to me, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, we've seen our bairns' bairns,
And yet, my dear John Anderson, I'm happy in your arms,
And sae are ye in mine, John—I'm sure ye'll ne'er say no,
Tho' the days are gane that we have seen, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, what pleasure does it gie,
To see sae many sprouts, John, spring up 'tween you and me,
And ilka lad and lass, John, in our footsteps to go,
Makes perfect heaven here on earth, John Anderson, my jo.

John Anderson, my jo, John, when we were first acquaint,
Your locks were like the raven, your bonnie brow was brent;
But now your head's turn'd bald, *John, your locks are like the snow,*
Yet *blessings on your frosty pow, John Anderson, my jo.*

John Anderson, my jo, John, frae year to year we've past,
And soon that year maun come, John, will bring us to our last:
But let na' that affright us, John, our hearts were ne'er our foe,
While in innocent delight we lived, John Anderson, my jo.

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* The heroine of this song was Miss J****, of Lochmaban. This lady, now Mrs. R*****, after residing some time in Liverpool, is settled with her husband in New York, North America. E.

† In the first volume of a collection entitled, *Poetry Original and Selected*, printed by Brash and Reid, of Glasgow, this song is given as follows:

John Anderson, my jo, Improved,

By ROBERT BURNS.

John Anderson, my jo, John, I wonder what you mean,
To rise so soon in the morning, and sit up so late at e'en;

I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw fellow,
In poortith I might mak a fen;
What care I in riches to wallow,
If I mauna marry Tam Glen!

There's Lowrie the laird o' Dumeller,
"Gude day to you brute," he comes ben:
He brags and he blaws o' his siller,
But when will he dance like Tam Glen?

My minnie does constantly deave me,
And bids me beware o' young men;
They flatter, she says, to deceive me,
But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen?

My daddie says, gin I'll forsake him,
He'll gie me gude hunder marks ten:
But, if it's ordain'd I maun take him,
O wha will I get but Tam Glen?

Yestreen at the valentine's dealing,
My heart to my mou gied a sten;
For thrice I drew ane without failing,
And thrice it was written Tam Glen.

The last Halloween I was waukin,
My droukit sark-sleeve, as ye ken;
His likeness cam up the house staukin,
And the very grey breeks o' Tam Glen!

John Anderson, my jo, John, we clamb the hill thegither,
And mony a canty day, John, we've had wi' ane anither;
Now we maun totter down, John, but *hand in hand we'll go,*
And we'll *sleep thegither at the foot, John Anderson, my jo.*

The stanza with which this song, inserted by Messrs. Brash and Reid, begins, is the chorus of the old song under this title; and though perfectly suitable to that wicked but witty ballad, it has no accordance with the strain of delicate and tender sentiment of this improved song. In regard to the five other additional stanzas, though they are in the spirit of the two stanzas that are unquestionably our bard's, yet every reader of discernment will see they are by an inferior hand; and the real author of them, ought neither to have given them, nor suffered them to be given, to the world, as the production of Burns. If there were no other mark of their spurious origin, the latter half of the third line in the seventh stanza, *our hearts were ne'er our foe*, would be proof sufficient. Many are the instances in which our bard has adopted defective rhymes, but a single instance cannot be produced, in which, to preserve the rhyme, he has given a feeble thought, in false grammar. These additional stanzas are not, however, without merit, and they may serve to prolong the pleasure which every person of taste must feel, from listening to a most happy union of beautiful music, with moral sentiments that are singularly interesting. E.

Come counsel, dear Tittie, don't tarry;
I'll gie you my bonnie black hen,
Gif ye will advise me to marry
The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

MY TOCHER'S THE JEWEL.

O meikle thinks my luve o' my beauty,
And meikle thinks my luve o' my kin;
But little thinks my luve I ken brawlie,
My tocher's the jewel has charms for him.
It's a' for the apple he'll nourish the tree;
It's a' for the hiney he'll cherish the bee;
My laddie's sae meikle in luve wi' the siller,
He can na hae luve to spare for me.

Your proffer o' luve's an airle-penny,
My tocher's the bargain ye wad buy;
But an ye be crafty, I am cunnin,
Sae ye wi' anither your fortune maun try.
Ye're like to the timmer o' yon rotten wood,
Ye're like to the bark o' yon rotten tree,
Ye'll slip frae me like a knotless thread,
And ye'll crack your credit wi' mae nor me.

THEN GUIDWIFE COUNT THE LAWIN.

Gane is the day and mirk's the night,
But we'll ne'er stray for faute o' light,
For ale and brandy's stars and moon,
And blue red wine's the rysin sun.

Then guidwife count the lawin, the lawin, the lawin,
Then guidwife count the lawin, and bring a coggie mair.

There's wealth and ease for gentlemen,
And semple-folk maun fecht and fen;
But here we're a' in ae accord,
For ilka man that 's drunk 's a lord.
Then guidwife count, &c.

My coggie is a haly pool,
That heals the wounds o' care and dool;
And pleasure is a wanton trout,
An' ye drink it a' ye'll find him out.
Then guidwife count, &c.

WHAT CAN A YOUNG LASSIE DO WI' AN AULD MAN.

What can a young lassie, what shall a young lassie,
What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man!
Bad luck on the pennie that tempted my minnie
To sell her poor Jenny for siller an lan'!
Bad luck on the pennie, &c.

He's always compleenin frae mornin to e'enin,
He hosts and he hirples the weary day lang;
He's doyl't and he's dozin, his blude it is frozen,
O, dreary's the night wi' a crazy auld man!

He hums and he hankers, he frets and he cankers,
I never can please him, do a' that I can;
He's peevish, and jealous of a' the young fellows,
O, dool on the day I met wi' an auld man!

My auld auntie Katie upon me takes pity,
I'll do my endeavour to follow her plan;
I'll cross him, and wrack him, until I heart-break him,
And then his auld brass will buy me a new pan.

THE BONNIE WEE THING.

Bonnie wee thing, cannie wee thing,
Lovely wee thing, was thou mine;
I wad wear thee in my bosom,
Lest my jewel I should tine.

Wishfully I look and languish
In that bonnie face of thine;
And my heart it stounds wi' anguish,
Lest my wee thing be na mine.

Wit, and grace, and love, and beauty,
In ae constellation shine;
To adore thee is my duty,
Goddess o' this soul o' mine!
Bonnie wee, &c.

O, FOR ANE AND TWENTY TAM!

Tune—"*The Moudiewort.*"

An O, for ane and twenty, Tam!
An hey, sweet ane and twenty, Tam!
I'll learn my kin a rattlin sang,
An I saw ane and twenty, Tam.

They snool me sair, and haud me down,
And gar me look like bluntie, Tam!
But three short years will soon wheel roun',
And then comes ane and twenty, Tam.
An O, for ane, &c.

A gleib o' lan', a claut o' gear,
Was left me by my auntie, Tam;
At kith or kin I need na spier,
An I saw ane and twenty, Tam.
An O, for ane, &c.

They'll hae me wed a wealthy coof,
Tho' I mysel hae plenty, Tam;
But hear'st thou, laddie, there's my loof,
I'm thine at ane and twenty, Tam!
An O, for ane, &c.

BESS AND HER SPINNING WHEEL.

O leeze me on my spinning wheel,
O leeze me on my rock and reel;
Frae tap to tae that cleeds me bien,
And haps me fiel and warm at e'en!
I'll set me down and sing and spin,
While laigh descends the simmer sun,
Blest wi' content, and milk and meal—
O leeze me on my spinning wheel.

On ilka hand the burnies trot,
And meet below my theekit cot;
The scented birk and hawthorn white
Across the pool their arms unite,
Alike to screen the birdie's nest,
And little fishes' caller rest;
The sun blinks kindly in the biel',
Where blythe I turn my spinnin wheel.

On lofty aiks the cushats wail,
And echo cons the doolfu' tale;
The linnwhites in the hazel braes,
Delighted, rival ither's lays:
The craik amang the claver hay,
The paitrick whirrin o'er the ley,
The swallow jinkin round my shiel,
Amuse me at my spinnin wheel.

Wi' sma' to sell, and less to buy,
Aboon distress, below envy,
O wha wad leave this humble state,
For a' the pride of a' the great?
Amid their flairing, idle toys,
Amid their cumbrous, dinsome joys,
Can they the peace and pleasure feel
Of Bessy at her spinning wheel!

COUNTRY LASSIE.

In simmer when the hay was mawn,
And corn wav'd green in ilka field,
While claver blooms white o'er the lea,
And roses blaw in ilka bield;
Blythe Bessie in the milking shiel,
Says I'll be wed come o't what will;
Out spak a dame in wrinkled eild,
O' gude advisement comes nae ill.

Its ye hae wooers mony ane,
And, lassie, ye're but young, ye ken;
Then wait a wee, and cannie wale
A routhie butt, a routhie ben:
There's Johnie o' the Buskie-glen,
Fu' is his barn, fu' is his byre;
Tak this frae me, my bonnie hen,
It's plenty beets the luver's fire.

For Johnie o' the Buskie-glen,
I dinna care a single flie;
He loes sae weel his craps and kye,
He has nae luve to spare for me:
But blythe's the blink o' Robie's e'e,
And weel I wat he loes me dear:
Ae blink o' him I wad na gie
For Buskie-glen and a' his gear.

O thoughtless lassie, life's a faught;
The canniest gate, the strife is sair;
But ay fu' han't is fechtin best,
A hungry care's an unco care:

But some will spend, and some will spare,
An' wilfu' folk maun hae their will;
Syne as ye brew, my maiden fair,
Keep mind that ye maun drink the yill.

O gear will buy me rigs o' land,
And gear will buy me sheep and kye;
But the tender heart o' leesome luve,
The gowd and siller canna buy:
We may be poor—Robie and I,
Light is the burden luve lays on;
Content and luve bring peace and joy,
What mair hae queens upon a throne?

FAIR ELIZA.

A GAELIC AIR.

Turn again, thou fair Eliza,
Ae kind blink before we part,
Rew on thy despairing lover!
Canst thou break his faithfu' heart!
Turn again, thou fair Eliza;
If to love thy heart denies,
For pity hide the cruel sentence
Under friendship's kind disguise!

Thee, dear maid, hae I offended?
The offence is loving thee:
Canst thou wreck his peace for ever,
Wha for thine wad gladly die?
While the life beats in my bosom,
Thou shalt mix in ilka throe:
Turn again, thou lovely maiden,
Ae sweet smile on me bestow.

Not the bee upon the blossom,
In the pride o' sinny noon;
Not the little sporting fairy,
All beneath the simmer moon;
Not the poet in the moment
Fancy lightens on his e'e,
Kens the pleasure, feels the rapture
That thy presence gies to me.

THE POSIE.

O luve will venture in, where it daur na weel be seen,
O luve will venture in where wisdom ance has been;
But I will down yon river rove, amang the wood sae green,
And a' to pu' a posie to my ain dear May.

The primrose I will pu', the firstling o' the year,
And I will pu' the pink, the emblem o' my dear,
For she's the pink o' womankind, and blooms without a peer;
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

I'll pu' the budding rose, when Phebus peeps in view,
For it's like a baumy kiss o' her sweet bonnie mou;
The hyacinth's for constancy, wi' its unchanging blue,
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The lily it is pure, and the lily it is fair,
And in her lovely bosom I'll place the lily there;
The daisy's for simplicity and unaffected air,
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The hawthorn I will pu', wi' its locks o' siller grey,
Where, like an aged man, it stands at break o' day,
But the songster's nest within the bush I winna tak away;
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The woodbine I will pu', when the e'ening star is near,
And the diamond-draps o' dew shall be her e'en sae clear;
The violet's for modesty, which weel she fa's to wear,
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

I'll tie the posie round wi' the silken band o' luve,
And I'll place it in her breast, and I'll swear by a' above,
That to my latest draught o' life the band shall ne'er remuve,
And this will be a posie to my ain dear May.

THE BANKS O' DOON.

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair;
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, fu' o' care!
Thou'll break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Oft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And fondly sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause luver stole my rose,
But, ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

SIC A WIFE AS WILLIE HAD.

Willie Wastle dwalt on Tweed,
The spot they ca'd it Linkumdoddie;
Willie was a wabster gude,
Cou'd stown a clue wi' ony bodie;
He had a wife was dour and din,
O Tinkler Madgie was her mither;
Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wad na gie a button for her.

She has an e'e, she has but ane,
The cat has twa the very colour;

Five rusty teeth forbye a stump,
A clapper tongue wad deave a miller;
A whiskin beard about her mou,
Her nose and chin they threaten ither;
Sic a wife, &c.

She's bow-hough'd, she's hein-shinn'd,
Ae limpin leg a hand-breed shorter;
She's twisted right, she's twisted left,
To balance fair in ilka quarter:
She has a hump upon her breast,
The twin o' that upon her shouther;
Sic a wife, &c.

Auld baudrans by the ingle sits,
An' wi' her loof her face a washin;
But Willie's wife is nae sae trig,
She dights her grunzie wi' a hushion:
Her walie nieves like midden-creels,
Her face wad fyle the Logan-water;
Sic a wife as Willie had,
I wad na gie a button for her.

GLOOMY DECEMBER.

Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December!
Ance mair I hail thee wi' sorrow and care;
Sad was the parting thou makes me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, Oh! ne'er to meet mair.
Fond lovers parting is sweet painful pleasure,
Hope beaming mild on the soft parting hour;
But the dire feeling, *O farewel! for ever*,
Is anguish unmingl'd and agony pure.

Wild as the winter now tearing the forest,
'Till the last leaf o' the summer is flown,
Such is the tempest has shaken my bosom,
Since my last hope and last comfort is gone;
Still as I hail thee, thou gloomy December,
Still shall I hail thee wi' sorrow and care;
For sad was the parting thou makes me remember,
Parting wi' Nancy, oh, ne'er to meet mair.

WILT THOU BE MY DEARIE.

Wilt thou be my dearie?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
O wilt thou let me cheer thee?
By the treasure of my soul,
And that's the love I bear thee!
I swear and vow, that only thou
Shall ever be my dearie.
Only thou, I swear and vow,
Shall ever be my dearie.

Lassie, say thou lo'es me;
Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou'lt refuse me:
If it winna, canna be,
Thou, for thine, may choose me;
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.
Lassie, let me quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.

SHE'S FAIR AND FAUSE.

She's fair and fause that causes my smart,
I lo'ed her meikle and lang;
She's broken her vow, she's broken my heart,
And I may e'en gae hang.
A coof cam in wi' rowth o' gear,
And I hae tint my dearest dear,
But woman is but warld's gear,
Sae let the bonnie lass gang.

Whae'er ye be that woman love,
To this be never blind,
Nae ferlie 'tis tho' fickle she prove,
A woman has't by kind:
O woman, lovely woman fair!
An angel form's faun to thy share,
'Twad been o'er meikle to gien thee mair,
I mean an angel mind.

AFTON WATER.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock-dove, whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear,
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far mark'd with the courses of clear, winding rills;
There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow!
There oft as mild evening weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As gathering sweet flowerets she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

BONNIE BELL.

The smiling spring comes in rejoicing,
And surly winter grimly flies;
Now crystal clear are the falling waters,
And bonnie blue are the sunny skies;

Fresh o'er the mountains breaks forth the morning,
The ev'ning gilds the ocean's swell;
All creatures joy in the sun's returning,
And I rejoice in my bonnie Bell.

The flow'ry spring leads sunny summer,
And yellow autumn presses near,
Then in his turn comes gloomy winter,
'Till smiling spring again appear.
Thus seasons dancing, life advancing,
Old time and nature their changes tell,
But never ranging, still unchanging,
I adore my bonnie Bell.

THE GALLANT WEAVER.

Where Cart rins rowin to the sea,
By mony a flow'r and spreading tree,
There lives a lad, the lad for me,
He is a gallant weaver.

Oh I had wooers aught or nine,
They gied me rings and ribbons fine;
And I was fear'd my heart would tine,
And I gied it to the weaver.

My daddie sign'd my tocher-band
To gie the lad that has the land,
But to my heart I'll add my hand,
And give it to the weaver.

While birds rejoice in leafy bowers;
While bees delight in opening flowers;
While corn grows green in simmer showers,
I'll love my gallant weaver*.

LOUIS WHAT RECK I BY THEE.

Louis, what reck I by thee,
Or Geordie on his ocean:
Dyvor, beggar louns to me,
I reign in Jeanie's bosom.

Let her crown my love her law,
And in her breast enthrone me:
Kings and nations, swith awa!
Reif randies I disown ye!

FOR THE SAKE OF SOMEBODY.

My heart is sair I dare na tell,
My heart is sair for somebody;
I could wake a winter night
For the sake of somebody.
Oh-hon! for somebody!
Oh-hey! for somebody!
I could range the world around,
For the sake o' somebody.

Ye powers that smile on virtuous love,
O, sweetly smile on somebody!
Frae ilka danger keep him free,
And send me safe my somebody.
Oh-hon! for somebody!
Oh-hey! for somebody!
I wad do—what wad I not,
For the sake o' somebody!

THE LOVELY LASS OF INVERNESS.

The lovely lass o' Inverness,
Nae joy nor pleasure can she see;
For e'en and morn she cries, alas!
And ay the saut tear blinds her e'e:
Drumossie moor, Drumossie day,
A waefu' day it was to me;
For there I lost my father dear,
My father dear and brethren three.

Their winding sheet the bluidy clay,
Their graves are growing green to see;
And by them lies the dearest lad
That ever blest a woman's e'e!
Now wae to thee, thou cruel lord,
A bluidy man I trow thou be;
For mony a heart thou hast made sair,
That ne'er did wrong to thine or thee.

A MOTHER'S LAMENT FOR THE DEATH OF HER SON.

Tune—"*Finlayston House.*"

Fate gave the word, the arrow sped,
And piere'd my darling's heart:
And with him all the joys are fled
Life can to me impart.
By cruel hands the sapling drops,
In dust dishonour'd laid:
So fell the pride of all my hopes,
My age's future shade.

The mother linnet in the brake
Bewails her ravish'd young;
So I, for my lost darling's sake,
Lament the live-day long.
Death, oft I've fear'd thy fatal blow,
Now, fond, I bare my breast,
O, do thou kindly lay me low
With him I love at rest!

O MAY, THY MORN.

O May, thy morn was ne'er sae sweet,
As the mirk night o' December;
For sparkling was the rosy wine,
And private was the chamber:
And dear was she I dare na name,
But I will aye remember.
And dear, &c.

* In some editions *sailor* is substituted for *weaver.*

And here's to them, that, like oursel,
Can push about the jorum;

And here's to them that wish us weel,
May a' that's gude watch o'er them;
And here's to them, we dare na tell,
The dearest o' the quorum.
And here's to, &c.

O WAT YE WHA'S IN YON TOWN.

O wat ye wha's in yon town,
Ye see the e'enin sun upon,
The fairest dame's in yon town,
That e'enin sun is shining on.

Now haply down yon gay green shaw,
She wanders by yon spreading tree;
How blest ye flow'rs that round her blaw,
Ye catch the glances o' her e'e.

How blest ye birds that round her sing,
And welcome in the blooming year,
And doubly welcome be the spring,
The season to my Lucy dear.

The sun blinks blythe on yon town,
And on you bonnie braes of Ayr;
But my delight in yon town,
And dearest bliss, is Lucy fair.

Without my love, not a' the charms
O' paradise could yield me joy;
But gie me Lucy in my arms,
And welcome Lapland's dreary sky.

My cave wad be a lover's bower,
Tho' raging winter rent the air;
And she a lovely little flower,
That I wad tent and shelter there.

O sweet is she in yon town,
Yon sinkin sun's gane down upon;
A fairer than's in yon town,
His setting beam ne'er shone upon.

If angry fate is sworn my foe,
And suffering I am doom'd to bear;
I careless quit aught else below,
But spare me, spare my Lucy dear.

For while life's dearest blood is warm,
Ae thought frae her shall ne'er depart,
And she—as fairest is her form!
She has the truest, kindest heart*.

* The heroine of this song, Mrs. O. (formerly Miss L. J.) died lately at Lisbon. This most accomplished and most lovely woman, was worthy of this beautiful strain of sensibility, which will convey some impression of her attractions to other generations. The song is written in the character of her husband, as the reader will have observed by our bard's letter to Mr. Syme inclosing this song, p. 220. (1799.) E.

A RED, RED ROSE.

O my luve's like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June;
O my luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I:
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:
I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve!
And fare thee weel, a while!
And I will come again, my luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

A VISION.

As I stood by yon roofless tower,
Where the wa'-flower scents the dewy air,
Where th' howlet mourns in her ivy bower,
And tells the midnight moon her care;

The winds were laid, the air was still,
The stars they shot alang the sky;
The fox was howling on the hill,
And the distant-echoing glens reply;

The stream adown its hazelly path,
Was rushing by the ruin'd wa's,
*Hasting to join the sweeping Nith,
Whase distant roaring swells and fa's;

The cauld blue north was streaming forth
Her lights, wi' hissing eerie din;
Athort the lift they start and shift,
Like fortune's favours, tint as win.

†By heedless chance I turn'd mine eyes,
And, by the moon-beam, shook, to see,
A stern and stalwart ghaist arise,
Attir'd as minstrels wont to be.

Had I a statue been o' stane,
His darin look had daunted me;
And on his bonnet grav'd was plain,
The sacred posy—Liberty!

* *Variation.* To join yon river on the Strath.
† *Variation.* Now looking over firth and fauld,
Her horn the pale-fac'd Cynthia rear'd;
When, lo, in form of minstrel auld,
A stern and stalwart ghaist appear'd.

And frae his harp sic strains did flow,
  Might rous'd the slumb'ring dead to hear;
But oh, it was a tale of woe,
  As ever met a Briton's ear!

He sang wi' joy his former day,
  He weeping wail'd his latter times;
But what he said it was nae play,
  I winna ventur't in my rhymes*.

* This poem, an imperfect copy of which was printed in Johnson's Museum, is here given from the poet's MS. with his last corrections. The scenery so finely described is taken from nature. The poet is supposed to be musing by night on the banks of the river Cluden, or Cloudon, and by the ruins of Lincluden-Abbey, founded in the twelfth century, in the reign of Malcolm IV. of whose present situation the reader may find some account in Pennant's tour in Scotland, or Grose's antiquities of that division of the island. Such a time and such a place are well fitted for holding converse with aerial beings. Though this poem has a political bias, yet it may be presumed that no reader of taste, whatever his opinions may be, would forgive its being omitted. Our poet's prudence suppressed the song of *Libertie*, perhaps fortunately for his reputation. It may be questioned whether even in the resources of his genius, a strain of poetry could have been found worthy of the grandeur and solemnity of this preparation. E.

The following poems, found among the MSS. of Mr. Burns, are now for the first time presented to the public.

Copy of a Poetical Address to Mr. William Tytler, with the present of the bard's picture.

Revered defender of beauteous Stuart,
Of Stuart, a name once respected,
A name, which to love was the mark of a true heart,
But now 'tis despised and neglected:

Tho' something like moisture conglobes in my eye,
Let no one misdeem me disloyal;
A poor friendless wand'rer may well claim a sigh,
Still more, if that wand'rer were royal.

My fathers that name have rever'd on a throne;
My fathers have fallen to right it;
Those fathers would spurn their degenerate son,
That name should he scoffingly slight it.

Still in prayers for k— G— I most heartily join,
The q—, and the rest of the gentry,
Be they wise, be they foolish, is nothing of mine;
Their title's avow'd by my country.

But why of that epocha make such a fuss,
* * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * *
* * * * * * * * * * *

But, loyalty, truce! we're on dangerous ground,
Who knows how the fashions may alter,
The doctrine, to-day, that is loyalty sound,
To-morrow may bring us a halter.

I send you a trifle, a head of a bard,
A trifle scarce worthy your care;
But accept it, good sir, as a mark of regard,
Sincere as a saint's dying prayer.

Now life's chilly evening dim shades on your eye,
And ushers the long dreary night;
But you, like the star that athwart gilds the sky,
Your course to the latest is bright.

My muse jilted me here, and turned a corner on me, and I have not got again into her good graces. Do me the justice to believe me sincere in my grateful remembrance of the many civilities you have honoured me with since I came to Edinburgh, and in assuring you that I have the honour to be

Revered sir,
Your obliged and very humble servant,
R. BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1787.

CALEDONIA.

Tune—"*Caledonian Hunt's Delight.*"

There was once a day, but old Time then was young,
That brave Caledonia, the chief of her line,
From some of your northern deities sprung,
(Who knows not that brave Caledonia's divine?)
From Tweed to the Orcades was her domain,
To hunt, or to pasture, or do what she would:
Her heavenly relations there fixed her reign,
And pledg'd her their godheads to warrant it good.

A lambkin in peace, but a lion in war,
The pride of her kindred, the heroine grew:
Her grandsire, old Odin, triumphantly swore,—
"Whoe'er shall provoke thee th' encounter shall rue!"
With tillage or pasture at times she would sport,
To feed her fair flocks by her green rustling corn;
But chiefly the woods were her fav'rite resort,
Her darling amusement, the hounds and the horn.

Long quiet she reigned; 'till thitherward steers
A flight of bold eagles from Adria's strand*:
Repeated, successive, for many long years,
They darken'd the air, and they plunder'd the land:
Their pounces were murder, and terror their cry,
They conquer'd and ruin'd a world beside;
She took to her hills, and her arrows let fly,
The daring invaders they fled or they died.

The fell Harpy-raven took wing from the north,
The scourge of the seas and the dread of the shore†;
The wild Scandinavian boar issu'd forth
To wanton in carnage and wallow in gore‡:
O'er countries and kingdoms their fury prevail'd,
No arts could appease them, no arms could repel;
But brave Caledonia in vain they assail'd,
As Largs well can witness, and Loncartie tell§.

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* The Romans. † The Saxons.
‡ The Danes.
§ Two famous battles, in which the Danes or Norwegians were defeated.

The Camelon-savage disturb'd her repose,
With tumult, disquiet, rebellion, and strife;
Provok'd beyond bearing, at last she arose,
And robb'd him at once of his hopes and his life*:
The Anglian lion, the terror of France,
Oft prowling, ensanguin'd the Tweed's silver flood;
But, taught by the bright Caledonian lance,
He learned to fear in his own native wood.

Thus bold, independent, unconquer'd, and free,
Her bright course of glory for ever shall run:
For brave Caledonia immortal must be;
I'll prove it from Euclid as clear as the sun:
Rectangle-triangle, the figure we'll chuse,
The upright is chance, and old time is the base;
But brave Caledonia's the hypothenuse;
Then ergo, she'll match them, and match them always†.

The following Poem was written to a gentleman, who had sent him a news-paper, and offered to continue it free of expense.

Kind sir, I've read your paper through,
And faith, to me, 'twas really new!
How guessed ye, sir, what maist I wanted?
This mony a day I've grain'd and gaunted,
To ken what French mischief was brewin;
Or what the drumlie Dutch were doin;
That vile doup-skelper, emperor Joseph,
If Venus yet had got his nose off;
Or how the collieshangie works
Atween the Russians and the Turks;
Or if the Swede, before he halt,
Would play anither Charles the twalt:
If Denmark, any body spak o't;
Or Poland, wha had now the tack o't;
How cut-throat Prussian blades were hingin;
How libbet Italy was singin;
If Spaniard, Portuguese, or Swiss,
Were sayin or takin aught amiss:
Or how our merry lads at hame,
In Britain's court kept up the game:
How royal George, the Lord leuk o'er him!
Was managing St. Stephen's quorum;
If sleekit Chatham Will was livin,
Or glaikit Charlie got his nieve in;
How daddie Burke the plea was cookin,
If Warren Hastings' neck was yeukin;
How cesses, stents, and fees were rax'd,
Or if bare a—s yet were tax'd;
The news o' princes, dukes, and earls,
Pimps, sharpers, bawds, and opera-girls;
If that daft buckie, Geordie W***s,
Was threshin still in hizzies' tails,
Or if he was grown oughtlins douser,
And no a perfect kintra cooser:
A' this and mair I never heard of;
And but for you I might despair'd of.
So gratefu', back your news I send you,
And pray, a' gude things may attend you!

Ellisland, Monday morning, 1790.

* The Piets.

† This singular figure of poetry, taken from the mathematics, refers to the famous proposition of Pythagoras, the 47th of Euclid. In a right-angled triangle, the square of the hypothenuse is always equal to the squares of the two other sides. E.

POEM

ON PASTORAL POETRY.

Hail, Poesie! thou nymph reserv'd!
In chase o' thee, what crouds hae swerv'd
Frae common sense, or sunk enerv'd
'Mang heaps o' clavers;
And och! o'er aft thy joes hae starv'd,
Mid a' thy favours!

Say, lassie, why thy train amang,
While, loud, the trump's heroic clang
And sock or buskin skelp alang
To death or marriage;
Scarce ane has tried the shepherd-sang
But wi' miscarriage?

In Homer's craft Jock Milton thrives;
Eschylus' pen Will Shakspeare drives;
Wee Pope, the knurlin, 'till him rives
Horatian fame;
In thy sweet sang, Barbauld, survives
Even Sappho's flame.

But thee, Theocritus, wha matches?
They're no herd's ballats, Maro's catches;
Squire Pope but busks his skinklin patches
O' heathen tatters;
I pass by hunders, nameless wretches,
That ape their betters.

In this braw age o' wit and lear,
Will nane the shepherd's whistle mair
Blaw sweetly in its native air
And rural grace;
And wi' the far-fam'd Grecian share
A rival place?

Yes! there is ane; a Scottish callan!
There's ane; come forrit, honest Allan!
Thou need na jouk behint the hallan,
A chiel sae clever;
The teeth o' time may gnaw Tantallan,
But thou's for ever.

Thou paints auld nature to the nines*,
In thy sweet Caledonian lines;
Nae gowden stream thro' myrtles twines,
Where Philomel,
While nightly breezes sweep the vines,
Her griefs will tell!

* *To the nines*—exactly. E.

In gowany glens thy burnie strays,
Where bonnie lasses bleach their claes;
Or trots by hazelly shaws and braes,
Wi' hawthorns gray,
Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays
At close o' day.

Thy rural loves are nature's sel;
Nae bombast spates o' nonsense swell;
Nae snap conceits, but that sweet spell
O' witching love,
That charm, that can the strongest quell,
The sternest move.

ON THE BATTLE OF SHERIFF-MUIR,

Between the duke of Argyle and the earl of Mar.

"O cam ye here the fight to shun,
Or herd the sheep wi' me, man?
Or ware ye at the Sherra-muir,
And did the battle see, man?"
I saw the battle, sair and tough,
And reekin-red ran mony a sheugh,
My heart for fear gae sough for sough,
To hear the thuds, and see the cluds
O' clans frae woods, in tartan duds,
Wha glaum'd at kingdoms three, man.

The red-coat lads wi' black cockades
To meet them were na slaw, man;
They rush'd and push'd, and blude outgush'd,
And mony a bouk did fa', man:
The great Argyle led on his files,
I wat they glanced twenty miles:
They hack'd and hash'd, while broad swords clash'd,
And thro' they dash'd, and hew'd and smash'd,
'Till fey men died awa, man.

But had you seen the philibegs,
And skyrin tartan trews, man,
When in the teeth they dar'd our whigs,
And covenant true blues, man;
In lines extended lang and large,
When bayonets oppos'd the targe,
And thousands hasten'd to the charge,
Wi' highland wrath they frae the sheath
Drew blades o' death, 'till, out o' breath,
They fled like frighted doos, man.

"O how deil, Tam, can that be true?
The chase gaed frae the north, man;
I saw myself, they did pursue
The horsemen back to Forth, man;
And at Dunblane in my ain sight,
They took the brig wi' a' their might,
And straught to Stirling winged their flight;
But, cursed lot! the gates were shut;
And mony a huntit, poor red-coat,
For fear, amaist did swarf, man."

My sister Kate cam up the gate
Wi' crowdie unto me, man;
She swoor she saw some rebels run
Frae Perth unto Dundee, man:
Their left-hand general had nae skill,
The Angus lads had nae good will
That day their neebers' blood to spill;
For fear, by foes, that they should lose
Their cogs o' brose; all crying woes,
And so it goes you see, man.

They've lost some gallant gentlemen,
Amang the Highland clans, man;
I fear my lord Panmure is slain,
Or fallen in whiggish hands, man:
Now wad ye sing this double fight,
Some fell for wrang, and some for right;
But mony bade the world gude-night;
Then ye may tell, how pell and mell,
By red claymores, and muskets knell,
Wi' dying yell, the tories fell,
And whigs to hell did flee, man*.

SKETCH.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

This day, Time winds th' exhausted chain,
To run the twelvemonth's length again:—
I see the old, bald-pated fellow,
With ardent eyes, complexion sallow,
Adjust the unimpair'd machine,
To wheel the equal, dull routine.

The absent lover, minor heir,
In vain assail him with their prayer,
Deaf as my friend, he sees them press,
Nor makes the hour one moment less.
Will you (the major's with the hounds,
The happy tenants share his rounds;
Coila's fair Rachel's care to-day†,
And blooming Keith's engaged with Gray)
From housewife cares a minute borrow—
—That grandchild's cap will do to-morrow—
And join with me a moralizing,
This day's propitious to be wise in.
First, what did yesternight deliver?
"Another year is gone for ever."
And what is this day's strong suggestion?
"The passing moment's all we rest on!"
Rest on—for what? what do we here?
Or why regard the passing year?
Will time, amus'd with proverb'd lore,
Add to our date one minute more?
A few days may—a few years must—
Repose us in the silent dust.
Then is it wise to damp our bliss?
Yes—all such reasonings are amiss!
The voice of nature loudly cries,
And many a message from the skies,
That something in us never dies:
That on this frail, uncertain state,
Hang matters of eternal weight:

* This was written about the time our bard made his tour to the Highlands, 1787. E.

† This young lady was drawing a picture of Coila from the Vision, p. 249.

That future life in worlds unknown
Must take its hue from this alone;
Whether as heavenly glory bright,
Or dark as misery's woeful night—
Since then, my honour'd, first of friends,
On this poor being all depends;
Let us th' important *now* employ,
And live as those who never die.
Tho' you, with days and honours crown'd,
Witness that filial circle round,
(A sight life's sorrows to repulse,
A sight pale envy to convulse)
Others now claim your chief regard;
Yourself, you wait your bright reward.

EXTEMPORE,

On the late Mr. William Smellie, author of the Philosophy of Natural History, and member of the Antiquarian and Royal Societies of Edinburgh.

To Crochallan came*
The old cock'd hat, the grey surtout, the same;
His bristling beard just rising in its might,
'Twas four long nights and days to shaving night;
His uncombed grizzly locks wild staring, thatch'd,
A head for thought profound and clear, unmatch'd;
Yet tho' his caustic wit was biting, rude,
His heart was warm, benevolent, and good.

POETICAL INSCRIPTION

For

AN ALTAR TO INDEPENDENCE,

At Kerrouchtry, the seat of Mr. Heron.

Written in Summer, 1795.

Thou of an independent mind,
With soul resolv'd, with soul resign'd;
Prepar'd pow'r's proudest frown to brave,
Who wilt not be, nor have a slave;
Virtue alone who dost revere,
Thy own reproach alone dost fear,
Approach this shrine, and worship here.

SONNET,

ON THE DEATH OF

ROBERT RIDDEL, Esq.

Of Glen Riddel, April, 1794.

No more, ye warblers of the wood, no more,
Nor pour your descant, grating, on my soul:
Thou young-eyed spring, gay in thy verdant stole,
More welcome were to me grim winter's wildest roar.

How can ye charm, ye flow'rs, with all your dyes?
Ye blow upon the sod that wraps my friend:
How can I to the tuneful strain attend?
That strain flows round th' untimely tomb where Riddel lies*.

Yes, pour, ye warblers, pour the notes of woe,
And soothe *the Virtues* weeping on this bier:
The *Man of Worth*, and has not left his peer,
Is in his "narrow house" for ever darkly low.

Thee, Spring, again with joy shall others greet,
Me, mem'ry of my loss will only meet.

MONODY,

ON A LADY FAMED FOR HER CAPRICE.

How cold is that bosom which folly once fired,
How pale is that cheek where the rouge lately glistened;
How silent that tongue which the echoes oft tired,
How dull is that ear which to flattery so listened.

If sorrow and anguish their exit await,
From friendship and dearest affection removed;
How doubly severe, Eliza, thy fate,
Thou diedst unwept as thou livedst unloved.

Loves, graces, and virtues, I call not on you;
So shy, grave, and distant, ye shed not a tear:
But come, all ye offspring of folly so true,
And flowers let us cull for Eliza's cold bier.

We'll search through the garden for each silly flower,
We'll roam through the forest for each idle weed;
But chiefly the nettle, so typical, shower,
For none e'er approached her but rued the rash deed.

We'll sculpture the marble, we'll measure the lay;
Here vanity strums on her idiot lyre;
There keen indignation shall dart on her prey,
Which spurning contempt shall redeem from his ire.

* Mr. Smellie, and our poet, were both members of a club in Edinburgh, under the name of Crochallan Fencibles. E.

* Robert Riddel, esq. of Friars' Carse, a very worthy character, and one to whom our bard thought himself under many obligations. It is a curious circumstance, that the *two concluding lines* express a sentiment exactly similar to one of the most beautiful passages in the "Pastor Fido," from the 7th to the 10th line of the Monologue, at the opening of the 3d act; yet Burns had no acquaintance with Guarini's work. Feeling dictates to genius in all ages, and all countries, and her language must be often the same. E.

. . . . . .

THE EPITAPH.

Here lies, now a prey to insulting neglect,
What once was a butterfly gay in life's beam:
Want only of wisdom denied her respect,
Want only of goodness denied her esteem.

Answer to a Mandate sent by the Surveyor of the windows, carriages, &c. to each farmer, ordering him to send a signed list of his horses, servants, wheel-carriages, &c., and whether he was a married man or a bachelor, and what children they had.

Sir, as your mandate did request,
I send you here a faithfu' list,
My horses, servants, carts, and graith,
To which I'm free to tak my aith.

Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,
I hae four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew before a pettle.
My *hand-afore**, a guid auld has-been,
And wight and wilfu' a' his days seen;
My *hand-a-hin*†, a gude brown filly,
Wha aft has borne me safe frae Killie‡;
And your auld borough mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime:
My *fur-a-hin*§, a guid, gray beast,
As e'er in tug or tow was trac'd:
The fourth, a Highland Donald hasty,
A d-mn'd red-wud Kilburnie blastie.
For-by a cowte, of cowtes the wale,
As ever ran before a tail;
An' he be spar'd to be a beast,
He'll draw me fifteen pund at least.

Wheel carriages I hae but few,
Three carts, and twa are feckly new;
An auld wheel-barrow, mair for token,
Ae leg and baith the trams are broken;
I made a poker o' the spindle,
And my auld mither brunt the trundle.
For men, I've three mischievous boys,
Run-deils for rantin and for noise;
A gadsman ane, a thresher tother,
Wee Davoc hauds the nowte in fother.
I rule them as I ought discreetly,
And often labour them completely,
And aye on Sundays duly nightly,
I on the questions tairge them tightly,
'Till faith wee Davie's grown sae gleg,
(Tho' scarcely langer than my leg)
He'll screed you off *effectual calling*,
As fast as ony in the dwalling.

I've nane in female servant station,
Lord keep me aye frae a' temptation!
I hae nae wife, and that my bliss is,
And ye hae laid nae tax on misses;
For weans I'm mair than weel contented,
Heaven sent me ane mair than I wanted;
My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,
She stares the daddie in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace.
But her, my bonnie, sweet, wee lady,
I've said enough for her already,
And if ye tax her or her mither,
By the L—d ye'se get them a' thegither!

And now, remember, Mr. Aiken,
Nae kind of licence out I'm taking.
Thro' dirt and dub for life I'll paidle,
E'er I sae dear pay for a saddle;
I've sturdy stumps, the Lord be thanked!
And a' my gates on foot I'll shank it.

This list wi' my ain hand I've wrote it,
The day and date as under noted;
Then know all ye whom it concerns
Subscripsi huic

ROBERT BURNS.

* The fore horse on the left hand, in the plough.

† The hindmost on the left hand, in the plough.

‡ Kilmarnock.

§ The same on the right hand, in the plough.

SONG.

Nae gentle dames, tho' e'er sae fair*,
Shall ever be my muse's care:
Their titles a' are empty show;
Gie me my highland lassie, O.

Within the glen sae bushy, O,
Aboon the plain sae rushy, O,
I set me down wi' right good will,
To sing my highland lassie, O.

O were yon hills and valleys mine,
Yon palace and yon gardens fine!
The world then the love should know
I bear my highland lassie, O.
Within the glen, &c.

But fickle fortune frowns on me,
And I maun cross the raging sea;
But while my crimson currents flow
I'll love my highland lassie, O.
Within the glen, &c.

Altho' thro' foreign climes I range,
I know her heart will never change,
For her bosom burns with honour's glow,
My faithful highland lassie, O.
Within the glen, &c.

For her I'll dare the billows' roar,
For her I'll trace a distant shore,
That Indian wealth may lustre throw
Around my highland lassie, O.
Within the glen, &c.

* *Gentle* is used here in opposition to *simple*, in the Scottish and old English sense of the word. Nae gentle dames—no high-blooded dames. *E.*

She has my heart, she has my hand,
By sacred truth and honour's band!
'Till the mortal stroke shall lay me low,
I'm thine, my highland lassie, O.

Farewell the glen sae bushy, O!
Farewell the plain sae rushy, O!
To other lands I now must go
To sing my highland lassie, O !*

IMPROMPTU.

On Mrs. ——'s birth day, 4th Nov. 1793.

Old winter with his frosty beard,
This once to Jove his prayer preferred:
What have I done of all the year,
To bear this hated doom severe?
My cheerless suns no pleasure know;
Night's horrid ear drags, dreary, slow:
My dismal months no joys are crowning,
But spleeny English, hanging, drowning.

Now, Jove, for once be mighty civil,
To counterbalance all this evil;
Give me, and I've no more to say,
Give me Maria's natal day!
That brilliant gift will so enrich me,
Spring, summer, autumn, cannot match me;
'Tis done! says Jove; so ends my story,
And winter once rejoic'd in glory.

ADDRESS TO A LADY.

Oh wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea;
My plaidie to the angry airt,
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee:
Or did misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desart were a paradise.
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign;
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

TO A YOUNG LADY,

MISS JESSY L——, DUMFRIES,

With books which the bard presented her.

Thine be the volumes, Jessy fair,
And with them take the poet's prayer:
That fate may in her fairest page,
With every kindlier, best presage
Of future bliss, enroll thy name:
With native worth, and spotless fame,
And wakeful caution, still aware
Of ill—but chief, man's felon snare;
All blameless joys on earth we find,
And all the treasures of the mind—
These be thy guardian and reward;
So prays thy faithful friend, *the bard.*

* This is an early production, and seems to have been written on Highland Mary. E.

SONNET,

Written on the 25th January, 1793, *the birth-day of the author,*

On hearing a thrush sing in a morning walk.

Sing on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough,
Sing on, sweet bird, I listen to thy strain;
See aged winter, 'mid his surly reign,
At thy blithe carol clears his furrow'd brow.

So in lone poverty's dominion drear,
Sits meek content with light unanxious heart,
Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,
Nor asks if they bring ought to hope or fear.

I thank thee, author of this opening day!
Thou whose bright sun now gilds yon orient skies!
Riches denied, thy boon was purer joys,
What wealth could never give nor take away!

Yet come, thou child of poverty and care,
The mite high heaven bestowed, that mite with thee I'll share.

EXTEMPORE.

*TO MR. S**E,*

On refusing to dine with him, after having been promised the first of company, and the first of cookery, 17*th December,* 1795.

No more of your guests, be they titled or not,
And cook'ry the first in the nation:
Who is proof to thy personal converse and wit,
Is proof to all other temptation.

. . . . . .

TO MR. S**E,

With a present of a dozen of porter.

O had the malt thy strength of mind,
Or hops the flavour of thy wit;
'Twere drink for first of human kind,
A gift that e'en for S**e were fit.

Jerusalem Tavern, Dumfries.

THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS.

Tune, "*Push about the Jorum.*"

April, 1795.

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let the loons beware, sir,
There's wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, sir.
The Nith shall run to Corsincon*,
And Criffel sink in Solway†,
E'er we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally!
Fall de rall, &c.

O let us not like snarling tykes
In wrangling be divided;
'Till slap come in an unco loon,
And wi' a rung decide it.
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang oursels united;
For never but by British hands
Maun British wrangs be righted.
Fall de rall, &c.

The kettle o' the kirk and state,
Perhaps a claut may fail in't;
But deil a foreign tinkler loon
Shall ever ca' a nail in't.
Our fathers' blude the kettle bought,
And wha wad dare to spoil it;
By heaven the sacrilegious dog
Shall fuel be to boil it.
Fall de rall, &c.

The wretch that wad a tyrant own,
And the wretch his true-born brother,
Who would set the *mob* aboon the *throne*,
May they be damned together.
Who will not sing "God save the king,"
Shall hang as high's the steeple;
But, while we sing "God save the king,"
We'll ne'er forget the people.

POEM,

Addressed to Mr. Mitchell, collector of excise, Dumfries, 1796.

Friend of the poet tried and leal,
Wha, wanting thee, might beg or steal;
Alake, alake, the meikle deil
Wi' a' his witches
Are at it, skelpin! jig and reel,
In my poor pouches.

I modestly fu' fain wad hint it,
That *one pound one*, I sairly want it;
If wi' the hizzie down ye sent it,
It would be kind;
And while my heart wi' life-blood dunted
I'd bear't in mind.

So may the auld year gang out moaning
To see the new come laden, groaning,
Wi' double plenty o'er the loanin
To thee and thine;
Domestic peace and comforts crowning
The hail design.

POSTSCRIPT.

Ye've heard this while how I've been licket,
And by fell death was nearly nicket:
Grim loon! he gat me by the fecket,
And sair me sheuk;
But by gude luck I lap a wicket,
And turn'd a neuk.

But by that health, I've got a share o't,
And by that life, I'm promised mair o't,
My hale and weel I'll take a care o't
A tentier way:
Then farewell folly, hide and hair o't,
For ance and aye.

Sent to a Gentleman whom he had offended.

The friend whom wild from wisdom's way,
The fumes of wine infuriate send,
(Not moony madness more astray,)
Who but deplores that hapless friend?

Mine was th' insensate frenzied part:
Ah, why should I such scenes outlive!
Scenes so abhorrent to my heart!
'Tis thine to pity and forgive.

POEM ON LIFE,

Addressed to colonel De Peyster, Dumfries, 1796.

My honoured colonel, deep I feel
Your interest in the poet's weal;
Ah! now sma' heart hae I to speel
The steep Parnassus,
Surrounded thus by bolus, pill,
And potion glasses.

O what a canty warld were it,
Would pain and care, and sickness spare it;
And fortune favour worth and merit,
As they deserve:
(And aye a rowth roast beef and claret;
Syne wha would starve?)

Dame life, tho' fiction out may trick her,
And in paste gems and frippery deck her;
Oh! flickering, feeble, and unsicker
I've found her still,
Aye wavering like the willow wicker,
'Tween good and ill.

Then that curst carmagnole, auld Satan,
Watches, like bawd'rons by a rattan,

* A high hill at the source of the Nith.

† A well-known mountain at the mouth of the same river.

Our sinfu' saul to get a claute on,
Wi' felon ire;
Syne, whip! his tail ye'll ne'er cast saut on,
He's off like fire.

Ah! Nick, ah Nick, it is na fair,
First showing us the tempting ware,
Bright wines and bonnie lasses rare,
To put us daft;
Syne weave, unseen, thy spider snare
O' hell's damned waft.

Poor man the flie, aft bizzes by,
And aft as chance he comes thee nigh,
Thy auld damned elbow yeuks wi' joy,
And hellish pleasure;
Already in thy fancy's eye,
Thy sicker treasure.

Soon heels o'er gowdie! in he gangs,
And like a sheep-head on a tangs,
Thy girning laugh enjoys his pangs
And murdering wrestle,
As dangling in the wind he hangs
A gibbet's tassel.

But lest you think I am uncivil,
To plague you with this draunting drivel,
Abjuring a' intentions evil,
I quat my pen:
The Lord preserve us frae the devil!
Amen! amen!

ADDRESS

To

THE TOOTH-ACHE.

My curse upon your venom'd stang,
That shoots my tortur'd gums alang;
And thro' my lugs gies mony a twang,
Wi' gnawing vengeance;
Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,
Like racking engines!

When fevers burn, or ague freezes,
Rheumatics gnaw, or cholic squeezes,
Our neighbour's sympathy may ease us,
Wi' pitying moan;
But thee—thou hell o' a' diseases,
Aye mocks our groan!

Adown my beard the slavers trickle!
I throw the wee stools o'er the mickle,
As round the fire the giglets keckle,
To see me loup;
While, raving mad, I wish a heckle
Were in their doup.

O' a' the num'rous human dools,
Ill har'sts, daft bargains, *cutty-stools*,
Or worthy friends rak'd i' the mools,
Sad sight to see!
The tricks o' knaves, or fash o' fools,
Thou bear'st the gree.

Where'er that place by priests ca'd hell,
Whence a' the tones o' mis'ry yell,
And ranked plagues their numbers tell,
In dreadfu' raw,
Thou, tooth-ache, surely bear'st the bell
Amang them a'!

O thou grim mischief-making chiel,
That gars the notes of *discord* squeel,
'Till daft mankind aft dance a reel
In gore a shoe-thick;—
Gie a' the faes o' Scotland's weal
A towmond's tooth-ache!

SONG.

Tune—"*Morag.*"

O wha is she that lo'es me,
And has my heart a keeping?
O sweet is she that lo'es me,
As dews o' summer weeping,
In tears the rose buds steeping.

CHORUS.

O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer,
O that's the queen o' woman kind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her.

If thou shalt meet a lassie,
In grace and beauty charming,
That e'en thy chosen lassie,
Ere while thy breast sae warming,
Had ne'er sic powers alarming.
O that's, &c.

If thou hadst heard her talking,
And thy attentions plighted,
That ilka body talking,
But her by thee is slighted;
And thou art all delighted.
O that's, &c.

If thou hast met this fair one;
When frae her thou hast parted,
If every other fair one
But her thou hast deserted,
And thou art broken hearted.—

O that's the lassie o' my heart,
My lassie ever dearer,
O that's the queen o' woman kind,
And ne'er a ane to peer her.

SONG.

Jockey's ta'en the parting kiss,
O'er the mountains he is gane;
And with him is a' my bliss,
Nought but griefs with me remain.

Spare my luve, ye winds that blaw,
Plashy sleets and beating rain!

Spare my luve, thou feathery snaw,
Drifting o'er the frozen plain.

When the shades of evening creep
O'er the day's fair, gladsome e'e,
Sound and safely may he sleep,
Sweetly blythe his waukening be!

He will think on her he loves,
Fondly he'll repeat her name;
For where'er he distant roves,
Jockey's heart is still at hame.

SONG.

My Peggy's face, my Peggy's form,
The frost of hermitage might warm;
My Peggy's worth, my Peggy's mind,
Might charm the first of human kind.
I love my Peggy's angel air,
Her face so truly, heavenly fair,
Her native grace so void of art,
But I adore my Peggy's heart.

The lily's hue, the rose's dye,
The kindling lustre of an eye;
Who but owns their magic sway,
Who but knows they all decay!
The tender thrill, the pitying tear,
The generous purpose, nobly dear,
The gentle look, that rage disarms,
These are all immortal charms.

Written in a Wrapper enclosing a letter to capt. Grose, to be left with Mr. Cardonnel, antiquarian.

Tune—"*Sir John Malcolm.*"

Ken ye ought o' captain Grose?
Igo, & ago.
If he's amang his friends or foes?
Iram, coram, dago.

Is he south, or is he north?
Igo, & ago.
Or drowned in the river Forth?
Iram, coram, dago.

Is he slain by Highland bodies?
Igo, & ago.
And eaten like a weather-haggis?
Iram, coram, dago.

Is he to Abram's bosom gane?
Igo, & ago.
Or haudin Sarah by the wame?
Iram, coram, dago.

Where'er he be, the Lord be near him!
Igo, & ago.
As for the deil he daur na steer him,
Iram, coram, dago.

But please transmit th' enclosed letter,
Igo, & ago.
Which will oblige your humble debtor,
Iram, coram, dago.

So may ye hae auld stanes in store,
Igo, & ago.
The very stanes that Adam bore,
Iram, coram, dago.

So may ye get in glad possession;
Igo, & ago.
The coins o' Satan's coronation!
Iram, coram, dago.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

OF FINTRY,

On receiving a favour.

I call no goddess to inspire my strains,
A fabled muse may suit a bard that feigns;
Friend of my life! my ardent spirit burns,
And all the tribute of my heart returns,
For boons accorded, goodness ever new,
The gift still dearer, as the giver you.

Thou orb of day! thou other paler light!
And all ye many sparkling stars of night;
If aught that giver from my mind efface;
If I that giver's bounty e'er disgrace;
Then roll to me, along your wandering spheres,
Only to number out a villain's years!

EPITAPH ON A FRIEND.

An honest man here lies at rest,
As e'er God with his image blest,
The friend of man, the friend of truth;
The friend of age, and guide of youth:
Few hearts like his, with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd:
If there's another world, he lives in bliss;
If there is none, he made the best of this.

A GRACE BEFORE DINNER.

O Thou, who kindly dost provide
For every creature's want!
We bless thee, God of nature wide,
For all thy goodness lent:
And, if it please thee, heavenly guide,
May never worse be sent;
But, whether granted or denied,
Lord bless us with content!
Amen!

To my dear and much honoured friend,

Mrs. DUNLOP, *of DUNLOP.*

ON SENSIBILITY.

Sensibility how charming,
Thou, my friend, canst truly tell;

But distress with horrors arming,
Thou hast also known too well!

Fairest flower, behold the lily,
Blooming in the sunny ray:
Let the blast sweep o'er the valley,
See it prostrate on the clay.

Hear the wood-lark charm the forest,
Telling o'er his little joys:
Hapless bird! a prey the surest,
To each pirate of the skies.

Dearly bought the hidden treasure,
Finer feelings can bestow;
Chords that vibrate sweetest pleasure,
Thrill the deepest notes of woe.

A Verse composed and repeated by Burns, *to the master of the house, on taking leave at a place in the Highlands, where he had been hospitably entertained.*

When death's dark stream I ferry o'er,
A time that surely shall come;
In Heaven itself, I'll ask no more,
Than just a Highland welcome.

FAREWELL TO AYRSHIRE.

Scenes of woe and scenes of pleasure,
Scenes that former thoughts renew,
Scenes of woe and scenes of pleasure,
Now a sad and last adieu!

Bonny Doon, sae sweet at gloaming,
Fare thee weel before I gang!
Bonny Doon, whare early roaming,
First I weav'd the *rustic sang!*

Bowers adieu, whare love, decoying,
First enthrall'd this heart o' mine;
There the safest sweets enjoying,—
Sweets that mem'ry ne'er shall tine!

Friends, so near my bosom ever,
Ye hae render'd moments dear;
But, alas! when forc'd to sever,
Then the stroke, O, how severe!

Friends! that parting tear reserve it,
Tho' 'tis doubly dear to me!
Could I think I did deserve it,
How much happier would I be!

Scenes of woe and scenes of pleasure,
Scenes that former thoughts renew;
Scenes of woe and scenes of pleasure,
Now a sad and last adieu!

GLOSSARY.

[illegible]

GLOSSARY.

THE *ch* and *gh* have always the guttural sound. The sound of the English diphthong *oo*, is commonly spelled *ou*. The French *u*, a sound which often occurs in the Scottish language, is marked *oo*, or *ui*. The *a*, in genuine Scottish words, except when forming a diphthong, or followed by an *e* mute after a single consonant, sounds generally like the broad English *a* in *wall*. The Scottish diphthong *ae*, always, and *ea*, very often, sound like the French *e* masculine. The Scottish diphthong *ey*, sounds like the Latin *ei*.

A.

A', all
Aback, away, aloof
Abeigh, at a shy distance
Aboon, above, up
Abread, abroad, in sight
Abreed, in breadth
Ae, one
Aff, off; *Aff loof*, unpremeditated
Afore, before
Aft, oft
Aften, often
Agley, off the right line, wrong
Aiblins, perhaps
Ain, own
Airl-penny, earnest-money
Airn, iron
Aith, an oath
Aits, oats
Aiver, an old horse
Aizle, a hot cinder
Alake, alas!
Alane, alone
Akwart, aukward
Amaist, almost
Amang, among
An', and, if
Ance, once
Anc, one
Anent, over against
Anither, another
Ase, ashes
Asklent, asquint, aslant
Asteer, abroad, stirring
Athort, athwart
Aught, possession; as *in a' my aught*, in all my possession
Aul lang syne, olden time, days of other years
Auld, old
Auldfarran, or *auld farrant*, sagacious, cunning, prudent
Ava, at all
Awa, away
Awfu', awful
Awn, the beard of barley, oats, &c.
Awnie, bearded
Ayont, beyond

B.

Ba', ball
Backets, ash-boards
Backlins comin', coming back, returning
Bad, did bid
Baide, endured, did stay
Baggie, the belly
Bainie, having large bones, stout
Bairn, a child
Bairntime, a family of children, a brood
Baith, both
Ban, to swear
Bane, bone
Bang, to beat, to strive
Bardie, diminutive of bard
Barefit, barefooted
Barmie, of, or like barm
Batch, a crew, a gang
Batts, botts
Baudrons, a cat
Bauld, bold
Bawk, bank
Baws'nt, having a white stripe down the face
Be, to let be, to give over, to cease
Bear, barley
Beastie, dimin. of beast
Beet, to add fuel to fire
Beld, bald
Belyve, bye and bye
Ben, into the *spence* or parlour
Benlomond, a noted mountain in Dumbartonshire
Bethankit, grace after meat
Beuk, a book
Bicker, a kind of wooden dish, a short race
Bie, or *bield*, shelter
Bien, wealthy, plentiful
Big, to build
Biggin, building, a house
Biggit, built
Bill, a bull
Billie, a brother, a young fellow
Bing, a heap of grain, potatoes, &c.
Birk, birch
Birken-shaw, *birchen-wood-shaw*, a small wood
Birkie, a clever fellow
Birring, the noise of partridges, &c., when they spring
Bit, crisis, nick of time
Bizz, a bustle, to buzz
Blastie, a shrivelled dwarf, a term of contempt
Blastit, blasted
Blate, bashful, sheepish
Blather, a bladder
Blaud, a flat piece of any thing; to slap
Blaw, to blow, to boast
Bleert and blin, bleered and blind
Bleerit, bleared, sore with rheum
Bleezing, blazing
Blellum, idle talking fellow
Blether, to talk idly; nonsense
Bleth'rin, talking idly
Blink, a little while, a smiling look; to look kindly, to shine by fits
Blinker, a term of contempt
Blinkin, smirking
Blue-gown, one of those beggars who get annually, on the king's birth-day, a blue cloak or gown, with a badge
Bluid, blood
Bluntie, snivelling
Blype, a shred, a large piece
Bock, to vomit, to gush intermittently
Bocked, gushed, vomited
Bodle, a small gold coin
Bogles, spirits, hobgoblins
Bonnie, or *bonny*, handsome, beautiful
Bonnock, a kind of thick cake of bread, a small jannack or loaf made of oatmeal
Boord, a board
Bore, a hole in a wall
Boortree, the shrub elder; planted much of old in hedges of barn-yards, &c.
Boost, behoved, must needs
Botch, an angry tumour
Bouk, vomiting, gushing out
Bousing, drinking
Bow-kail, cabbage
Bowt, bended, crooked
Brachens, fern
Brae, a declivity, a precipice, the slope of a hill
Braid, broad
Braik, a kind of harrow
Brainge, to run rashly forward
Braign't, reeled forward
Brak, broke, made insolvent
Branks, a kind of wooden curb for horses
Brash, a sudden illness
Brats, coarse clothes, rags, &c.

Brattle, a short race, hurry, fury
Braw, fine, handsome
Brawlyt, or *brawlie*, very well, finely, heartily
Braxie, a morbid sheep
Breastie, dimin. of breast
Breastie, did spring up or forward
Breckan, fern
Breef, an invulnerable or irresistible spell
Breeks, breeches
Brent, smooth
Brewin, brewing
Brie, juice, liquid
Brig, a bridge
Brunstane, brimstone
Brisket, the breast, the bosom
Brither, a brother
Brock, a badger
Brogue, a hum, a trick
Broo, broth, liquid, water
Broose, broth, a race at country weddings, who shall first reach the bridegroom's house on returning from church
Brugh, a burgh
Bruilzie, a broil, a combustion
Brunt, did burn, burnt
Brust, to burst, burst
Buchan-bullers, the boiling of the sea among the rocks on the coast of Buchan
Buckskin, an inhabitant of Virginia
Bught, a pen
Bughten-time, the time of collecting the sheep in the pens to be milked
Buirdly, stout made, broad built
Bum-clock, a humming beetle that flies in the summer evenings
Bummin, humming as bees
Bummle, to blunder
Bummler, a blunderer
Bunker, a window seat
Burdies, dimin. of birds
Bure, did bear
Burn, or *burnie*, a water, a rivulet
Burnewin, i. e. *burn the wind*, a blacksmith
Burnie, dimin. of burn
Buskie, bushy
Buskit, dressed
Busks, dresses
Busle, a bustle, to bustle
Buss, shelter
But, *bot*, with
But an' ben, the country kitchen and parlour
By himself, lunatic, distracted
Byke, a bee-hive
Byre, a cow-stable, a shippen

C.

Ca', to call, to name, to drive
Ca't, or *ca'd*, called, driven, calved
Cadger, a carrier
Cadie, or *caddie*, a person, a young fellow
Caff, chaff
Caird, a tinker
Cairn, a loose heap of stones
Calf-ward, a small enclosure for calves
Callan, a boy
Caller, fresh, sound, refreshing
Cannie, gentle, mild, dexterous
Cannilie, dexterously, gently
Cantie, or *canty*, cheerful, merry
Cantraip, a charm, a spell
Cap-stane, cope-stone, key-stone
Careerin, cheerfully
Carl, an old man
Carlin, a stout old woman
Cartes, cards
Caudron, a caldron
Cauk and keel, chalk and red clay
Cauld, cold
Caup, a wooden drinking vessel
Cesses, taxes
Chanter, a part of a bagpipe
Chap, a person, a fellow, a blow
Chaup, a stroke, a blow
Cheekit, cheeked
Cheep, a chirp, to chirp
Chiel, or *cheel*, a young fellow
Chimla, or *chimlie*, a fire-grate, fire-place
Chimla-lug, the fire-side
Chittering, shivering, trembling
Chockin, choaking
Chow, to chew; *cheek for chow*, side by side
Chuffie, fat-faced
Clachan, a small village about a church, a hamlet
Claise, or *claes*, clothes
Claith, cloth
Claithing, clothing
Claivers, nonsense, not speaking sense
Clap, clapper of a mill
Clarkit, wrote
Clash, an idle tale, the story of the day
Clatter, to tell little idle stories; an idle story
Claught, snatched at, laid hold of
Claut, to clean, to scrape
Clauted, scraped
Clavers, idle stories
Claw, to scratch
Cleed, to clothe
Cleeds, clothes
Cleekit, having caught
Clinkin, jerking, clinking
Clinkumbell, who rings the church bell
Clips, sheers
Clishmaclaver, idle conversation
Clock, to hatch; a beetle
Clockin, hatching
Cloot, the hoof of a cow, sheep, &c.
Clootie, an old name for the Devil
Clour, a bump or swelling after a blow
Cluds, clouds
Coaxin, wheedling
Coble, a fishing-boat
Cockernony, a lock of hair tied up on a girl's head, a cap
Coft, bought
Cog, a wooden dish
Coggie, dimin. of cog
Coila, from *Kyle*, a district of Ayrshire, so called, saith tradition, from Coil, or Coilus, a Pictish monarch
Collie, a general, and sometimes a particular name for country curs
Collieshangie, quarrelling
Commaun, command
Cood, the cud
Coof, a blockhead, a ninny
Cookit, appeared, and disappeared by fits
Coost, did cast
Coot, the ancle or foot
Cootie, a wooden kitchen dish;—*also those fowls whose legs are clad with feathers are said to be* cootie
Corbies, a species of the crow
Core, corps, party, clan
Corn't, fed with oats
Cotter, the inhabitant of a *cot-house* or cottage
Couthy, kind, loving
Cowe, to terrify, to keep under, to lop; a fright, a branch of furze, broom, &c.
Cowp, to barter, to tumble over; a gang
Cowpit, tumbled
Cowrin, cowering
Cowte, a colt
Cozie, snug
Cozily, snugly
Crabbit, crabbed, fretful
Crack, conversation, to converse
Crackin, conversing
Craft, or *croft*, a field near a house, *in old husbandry*
Craiks, cries or calls incessantly, a bird
Crambo-clink, or *crambo-jingle*, rhymes, doggrel verses
Crank, the noise of an ungreased wheel
Crankous, fretful, captious
Cranreuch, the hoar-frost
Crap, a crop; to crop
Craw, a crow of a cock, a rook
Creel, a basket; *to have one's wits in a creel*, to be crazed, to be fascinated
Creeshie, greasy
Crood, or *croud*, to coo as a dove
Croon, a hollow and continued moan; to make a noise like the continued roar of a bull; to hum a tune
Crooning, humming
Crouchie, crook-backed
Crouse, cheerful, courageous
Crously, cheerfully, courageously
Crowdie, a composition of oat-meal and boiled water, sometimes

from the broth of beef, mutton, &c.
Crowdictime, breakfast-time
Crowlin, crawling
Crummock, a cow with crooked horns
Crump, hard and brittle, *spoken of bread*
Crunt, a blow on the head with a cudgel
Cuif, a blockhead, a ninny
Cunnock, a short staff with a crooked head
Curchie, a curtsey
Curler, a player at a game on the ice, practised in Scotland, called curling
Curlie, curled, whose hair falls naturally in ringlets
Curling, a well known game on ice
Curmurring, murmuring, a slight rumbling noise
Curpin, the crupper
Cushat, the dove, or wood-pigeon
Cutty, short, a spoon broken in the middle

D.

Daddie, a father
Daffin, merriment, foolishness
Daft, merry, giddy, foolish
Daimen, rare, now and then; *daimen-icker*, an ear of corn now and then
Dainty, pleasant, good-humoured, agreeable
Dales, plains, valleys
Darklins, darkling
Daud, to thrash, to abuse
Daur, to dare
Daurt, dared
Daurg, or *daurk*, a day's labour
Davie, David
Dawd, a large piece
Dawtit, or *dawtet*, fondled, caressed
Dearies, dimin. of dears
Dearthfu', dear
Deave, to deafen
Deil-ma-care! no matter! for all that!
Deleerit, delirious
Descrive, to describe
Dight, to wipe, to clean corn from chaff
Dight, cleaned from chaff
Dinna, do not
Ding, to worst, to push
Dirl, a slight tremulous stroke or pain
Dizzen, or *diz'n*, a dozen
Doited, stupified, hebetated
Dolt, stupified, crazed
Donsie, unlucky
Dool, sorrow; *to sing dool*, to lament, to mourn
Doos, doves
Dorty, saucy, nice
Douce, or *douse*, sober, wise, prudent
Doucely, soberly, prudently
Dought, was or were able
Doup, backside
Doup-skelper, one that strikes the tail
Dour and din, sullen, sallow
Doure, stout, durable, stubborn, sullen
Dow, am or are able, can
Dowff, pithless, wanting force
Dowie, worn with grief, fatigue, &c., half asleep
Downa, am or are not able, cannot
Doylt, stupid
Drap, a drop; to drop
Drapping, dropping
Draunting, drawling
Dreep, to ooze, to drop
Dreigh, tedious, long about it
Dribble, drizzling, slaver
Drift, a drove
Droddum, the breech
Drone, part of a bagpipe
Droop, rumpl't, that droops at the crupper
Drouket, wet
Drouth, thirst, drought
Drucken, drunken
Drumly, muddy
Drummock, meal and water mixed, raw
Drunt, pet, sour humour
Dub, a small pond
Duddie, ragged
Duds, rags, clothes
Dung, worsted, pushed, driven
Dunted, bent
Dush, to push as a ram, &c.
Dusht, pushed by a ram, ox, &c.

E.

E'e, the eye
Een, the eyes
E'enen, evening
Eerie, frighted, dreading spirits
Eild, old age
Elbuck, the elbow
Eldritch, ghastly, frightful
En', end
Enbrugh, Edinburgh
Eneugh, enough
Especial, especially
Ettle, to try, attempt
Eydent, diligent

F.

Fa', fall, lot; to fall
Fa's, does fall, waterfalls
Faddom't, fathomed
Fae, foe
Faem, foam
Faiket, unknown
Fairin, a fairing, a present
Fallow, fellow
Fand, did find
Farl, a cake of bread
Fash, trouble, care; to trouble, to care for
Fasht, troubled
Fastereen-een, Fastens Even
Fauld, a fold, to fold
Faulding, folding
Faut, fault
Fawsont, decent, seemly
Feal, a field, smooth
Fearfu', frightful
Fear't, frighted
Feat, neat, spruce
Fecht, to fight
Fechtin, fighting
Feck, many, plenty
Fecket, waistcoat
Feckfu', large, brauny, stout
Feckless, puny, weak, silly
Feckly, weakly
Feg, a fig
Feide, feud, enmity
Fell, keen, biting; the flesh immediately under the skin, a field pretty level, on the side or top of a hill
Fen, successful struggle, fight
Fend, to live comfortably
Ferlie, or *ferley*, to wonder; a wonder, a term of contempt
Fetch, to pull by fits
Fetch't, pulled intermittently
Fidge, to fidget
Fiel, soft, smooth
Fient, fiend, *a petty oath*
Fier, sound, healthy; a brother, a friend
Fisle, to make a rustling noise, to fidget; a bustle
Fit, a foot
Fittie-lan, the nearer horse of the hindmost pair in the plough
Fizz, to make a hissing noise, like fermentation
Flainen, flannel
Fleech, to supplicate in a flattering manner
Fleech'd, supplicated
Fleechin, supplicating
Fleesh, a fleece
Fleg, a kick, a random blow
Flether, to decoy by fair words
Fletherin, flattering
Fley, to scare, to frighten
Flichter, to flutter, *as young nestlings, when their dam approaches*
Flickering, meeting, encountering with
Flinders, sherds, broken pieces
Flingin-tree, a piece of timber hung by way of partition between two horses in a stable, a flail
Flisk, to fret at the yoke
Fliskit, fretted
Flitter, to vibrate like the wings of small birds
Flittering, fluttering, vibrating
Flunkie, a servant in livery
Foord, a ford
Forbears, forefathers
Forbye, besides
Forfairn, distressed, worn out, jaded
Forfoughten, fatigued
Forgather, to meet, to encounter with

Forgie, to forgive
Forjesket, jaded with fatigue
Fother, fodder
Fou', full, drunk
Foughten. troubled, harassed
Fouth, plenty, enough, or more than enough
Fow, a bushel, &c. also a pitch-fork
Frae, from
Freath, froth
Frien', friend
Fu', full
Fud, the scut, or tail of the hare, coney, &c.
Fuff, to blow intermittently
Fuff't, did blow
Funnie, full of merriment
Fur, a furrow
Furm, a form, bench
Fyke, trifling cares; to piddle, to be in a fuss about trifles
Fyle, to soil, to dirty
Fyl't, soiled, dirtied

G.

Gab, the mouth, to speak boldly, or pertly
Gaber-lunzie, an old man
Gadsman, plough-boy, the boy that drives the horses in the plough
Gae, to go; *gaed*, went; *gaen*, or *gane*, gone; *gaun*, going
Gaet, or *gate*, way, manner, road
Gang, to go, to walk
Gar, to make, to force to
Gar't, forced to
Garten, a garter
Gash, wise, sagacious, talkative, to converse
Gashin, conversing
Gaucy, jolly, large
Gear, riches, goods of any kind
Geck, to toss the head in wantonness or scorn
Ged, a pike
Gentles, great folks
Geordie, a guinea
Get, a child, a young one
Ghaist, a ghost
Gie, to give; *gied*, gave; *gien*, given
Giftie, dimin. of gift
Giglets, playful girls
Gillie, dimin. of gill
Gilpey, a half grown, half informed boy or girl, a romping lad, a hoyden
Gimmer, an ewe from one to two years old
Gin, if, against
Gipsey, a young girl
Girn, to grin, to twist the features in rage, agony, &c.
Girning, grinning
Gizz, a periwig
Glaikit, inattentive, foolish
Glaive, a sword
Gawky, half-witted, foolish, romping
Glaizie, glittering, smooth like a glass
Glaum'd, aimed, snatched
Gleck, or *gleg*, sharp, ready
Gleib, glebe
Glen, dale, deep valley
Gley, a squint, to squint; *a-gley*, off at a side, wrong
Gleib-gabbet, that speaks smoothly and readily
Glint, to peep
Glinted, peeped
Glintin, peeping
Gloamin, the twilight
Glowr, to stare, to look; a stare, a look
Glowred, looked, stared
Gowan, the flower of the daisy, dandelion, hawkweed, &c.
Gowany, gowany glens, daisied dales
Gowd, gold
Gowff, the game of golf; to strike *as the bat does the ball at golf*
Gowff'd, struck
Gowk, a cuckoo, a term of contempt
Gowl, to howl
Grane, or *grain*, a groan, to groan
Grain'd, groaned
Grained and grunted, groaned and grunted
Graining, groaning
Graip, a pronged instrument for cleaning stables
Graith, accoutrements, furniture dress, *gear*
Grannie, grandmother
Grape, to grope
Grapit, groped
Grat, wept, shed tears
Great, intimate, familiar
Gree, to agree; *to bear the gree*, to be decidedly victor
Gree't, agreed
Greet, to shed tears, to weep
Greetin, crying, weeping
Grippet, catched, seized
Groat, *to get the whistle of one's groat*, to play a losing game
Gronsome, loathsomely, grim
Grozet, a gooseberry
Grumph, a grunt, to grunt
Grumphie, a sow
Grun', ground
Grunstane, a grindstone
Gruntle, the phiz, a grunting noise
Grunzie, mouth
Grushie, thick, of thriving growth
Gude, the Supreme Being; good
Guid, good
Guid-mornin, good morrow
Guid-e'en, good evening
Guidman and *guidwife*, the master and mistress of the house; *young guidman*. a man newly married
Gully, or *gullie*, a large knife
Guidfather, *Guidmother*, father-in-law, mother-in-law
Gumlie, muddy
Gusty, tasteful

H.

Ha', hall
Ha' bible, the great bible that lies in the hall
Hae, to have
Haen, had, *the participle*
Haet, *fient haet*, a petty oath of negation, nothing
Haffet, the temple, the side of the head
Hafflins, nearly half, partly
Hag, a scar, or gulf in mosses and moors
Haggis, a kind of pudding boiled in the stomach of a cow or sheep
Hain, to spare, to save
Hain'd, spared
Hairst, harvest
Haith, a petty oath
Haivers, nonsense, speaking without thought
Hal', or *hald*, an abiding place
Hale, whole, tight, healthy
Haly, holy
Hame, home
Hallan, a particular partition. wall in a cottage; or, more properly, a seat of turf at the outside
Hallowmas, Hallow-eve, the 31st of October
Hamely, homely, affable
Han', or *haun'*, hand
Hap, an outer garment, mantle, plaid, &c. to wrap, to cover, to hap
Happer, a hopper
Happing, hopping
Hap step an' loup, hop skip and leap
Harkit, hearkened
Harn, very coarse linen
Hash, a fellow that neither knows how to dress nor act with propriety
Hastit, hastened
Haud, to hold
Haughs, low lying, rich lands; valleys
Haurl, to drag, to peel
Haurlin, peeling
Haveral, a half-witted person, half-witted
Havins, good manners, decorum, good sense
Hawkie, a cow, *properly one with a white face*
Heapit, heaped
Healsome, healthful, wholesome
Hearse, hoarse
Hear't, hear it
Heather, heath
Hech! oh! strange
Hecht, promised to foretel something that is to be got or given; offered; foretold; the thing foretold
Heckle, a board in which are fixed a number of pins, used in dressing hemp, flax, &c.
Heeze, to elevate, to raise
Helm, the rudder or helm
Herd, to tend flocks, one who tends flocks
Herrin, a herring

Herry, to plunder, *most properly to plunder birds' nests*
Herryment, plundering, devastation
Hersel, herself, also a herd of cattle, of any sort
Het, hot
Heugh, a crag, a coal-pit
Hilch, a hobble, to halt
Hilchin, halting
Himsel, himself
Hiney, honey
Hing, to hang
Hirple, to walk crazily, to creep
Hissel, so many cattle as one person can attend
Histie, dry, chapt, barren
Hitcht, a loop, a knot
Hizzie, hussy, a young girl
Hoddin, the motion of a sage countryman, riding on a cart-horse; humble
Hog-score, a kind of distance line, in curling, drawn across the *rink*
Hog-shouther, a kind of horse-play, by justling with the shoulder; to justle
Hool, outer skin or case, a nut-shell, pease-swade
Hoolie, slowly, leisurely
Hoolie! take leisure, stop
Hoord, a hoard; to hoard
Hoordet, hoarded
Horn, a spoon made of horn
Hornie, one of the many names of the devil
Host, or *hoast*, to cough; a cough
Hostin, coughing
Hotch'd, turned topsy-turvey, blended, mixed
Houghmagandie, fornication
Houlet, an owl
Housie, dimin. of house
Hove, to heave, to swell
Hov'd, heaved, swelled
Howdie, a midwife
Howe, hollow, a hollow or dell
Howebackit, sunk in the back, *spoken of a horse, &c.*
Howff, a landlady, a house of resort
Howk, to dig
Howkit, digged
Howkin, digging
Howlet, an owl
Hoy, to urge
Hoy't, urged
Hoyse, a pull upwards
Hoyt, to amble crazily
Hughoc, dimin. of Hugh
Hurcheon, hedgehog
Hurdies, the loins, the crupper
Hushion, cushion

I.

I', in
Icker, an ear of corn
Ier-oe, a great-grandchild
Ilk, or *ilka*, each, every
Ill-willie, ill-natured, malicious, niggardly
Ingine, genius, ingenuity
Ingle, fire, fire-place
Ise, I shall or will
Ither, other, one another

J.

Jad, jade; also a familiar term among country folks for a giddy young girl
Jauk, to dally, to trifle
Jaukin, trifling, dallying
Jaup, a jerk of water; to jerk as agitated water
Jaw, coarse raillery, to pour out, to shut, to jerk as water
Jillet, a jilt, a giddy girl
Jimp, to jump; slender in the waist, handsome
Jink, to dodge, to turn a corner; a sudden turning, a corner
Jinker, that turns quickly, a gay sprightly girl, a wag
Jinkin, dodging
Jirt, a jerk
Jocteleg, a kind of knife
Jouk, to stoop, to bow the head
Jow, *to jow*, a verb which includes both the swinging motion and pealing sound of a large bell
Jundie, to justle

K.

Kae, a daw
Kail, colewort, a kind of broth
Kail-runt, the stem of colewort
Kain, fowls, &c. paid as rent by a farmer
Kebbuck, a cheese
Keek, a peep, to peep
Kelpies, a sort of mischievous spirits, said to haunt fords and ferries at night, especially in storms
Ken, to know; *kend* or *ken't*, knew, known
Kennin, a small matter
Kenspeckle, well-known
Ket, matted, hairy, a fleece of wool
Kiaugh, carking, anxiety
Kilt, to toss up the clothes
Kimmer, a young girl, a gossip
Kin', kindred
Kin, kind
King's-hood, a certain part of the entrails of an ox, &c.
Kintra, country; *kintra-cooser*, country stallion
Kirn, the harvest-supper, a churn
Kirsen, to christen, or baptize
Kist, chest, a shop-counter
Kitchen, any thing that eats with bread, to serve for soup, gravy, &c.
Kittle, to tickle, ticklish, likely
Kittlin, a young cat
Kiuttle, to cuddle
Kiuttlin, cuddling
Knaggie, like *knags*, or points of rocks
Knappin-hammer, a hammer for breaking stones
Knowe, a small round hillock
Kye, cows
Kyle, a district in Ayrshire
Kyte, the belly
Kythe, to discover, to show one's self

L.

Laddie, dimin. of lad
Laggen, the angle between the side and bottom of a wooden dish
Laigh, low
Lairing, wading and sinking in snow, mud, &c.
Laith, loath
Laithfu', bashful, sheepish
Lallans, Scottish dialect
Lambie, dimin. of lamb
Lan', land, estate
Lane, lone; *my lane*, *thy lane*, &c. myself alone
Lanely, lonely
Lang, long; *to think lang*, to long, to weary
Lap, did leap
Lave, the rest, the remainder, the others
Laverock, the lark
Lawin, short, reckoning bill
Lawlan, lowland
Lea'e, to leave
Leal, loyal, true, faithful
Lear, *pronounced* lare, learning
Lea-rig, grassy ridge
Lee-lang, live-long
Leesome, pleasant
Leeze me, a phrase of congratulatory endearment; I am happy in thee, or proud of thee
Leister, a three-pronged dart for striking fish
Leugh, did laugh
Leuk, a look; to look
Libbet, gelded
Lift, sky
Lightly, sneeringly; to sneer at
Lilt, a ballad, a tune; to sing
Limmer, a kept mistress, a strumpet
Limpit, a kind of shell-fish
Limp't, limped, hobbled
Link, to trip along
Linkin, tripping
Linn, a waterfall
Lint, flax; *lint i' the bell*, flax in flower
Lintwhite, a linnet
Loan, or *loanin*, the place of milking
Loof, the palm of the hand
Loot, did let
Looves, *plural of* loaf
Loun, a fellow, a ragamuffin, a woman of easy virtue
Loup, jump, leap; to jump, to leap

Low, a flame
Lowin, flaming
Lowrie, *abbreviation of* Lawrence
Lowse, to loose
Lows'd, loosed
Lug, the ear, a handle
Luggct, having a handle
Luggie, a small wooden dish with a handle
Lum, the chimney
Lunch, a large piece of cheese, flesh, &c.
Lunt, a column of smoke; to smoke
Luntin, smoking
Lyart, of a mixed colour, grey

M.

Mae, more
Mailen, farm
Mair, more
Maist, most, almost
Maistly, mostly
Mak, to make
Makin, making
Mallie, Molly
Mang, among
Manse, the parsonage-house, where the minister lives
Manteele, a mantle
Mark, marks. *This and several other nouns which in English require an* s, *to form the plural, are in Scotch, like the words* sheep, deer, *the same in both numbers*
Mar's year, the year 1715
Mashlum, *meslin*, mixed corn
Mask, to mash, *as malt, &c.*
Maskin-pat, a tea-pot
Maukin, a hare
Maun, must
Mavis, the thrush
Maw, to mow
Mawin, mowing
Meere, a mare
Meickle, much
Melancholious, mournful
Melder, corn, or grain of any kind, sent to the mill to be ground
Mell, to meddle; also a mallet for pounding barley in a stone trough
Melvie, to soil with meal
Men', to mend
Mense, good manners, decorum
Menseless, ill-bred, rude, impudent
Merle,
Messin, a small dog
Midden, a dunghill
Midden-hole, a gutter at the bottom of a dunghill
Mim, prim, affectedly meek
Min', mind, remembrance
Mind't, mind it, resolved, intending
Minnie, mother, dam
Mirk, dark
Misca, to abuse, to call names
Misca'd, abused
Mislear'd, mischievous, unmannerly
Misteuk, mistook
Mither, a mother
Mixtie-maxtie, confusedly mixed
Moistify, to moisten
Mony, or *monie*, many
Moop, to nibble as a sheep
Moorlan, of or belonging to moors
Morn, the next day, tomorrow
Mou, the mouth
Moudiwort, a mole
Mousie, dimin. of *mouse*
Muckle, or *mickle*, great, big, much
Musie, dimin. of *muse*
Muslin-kail, broth, composed simply of water, shelled barley, and greens
Mutchkin, an English pint
Mysel, myself

N.

Na', no, not, nor
Nae, no, not any
Naething, or *naithing*, nothing
Naig, a horse
Nane, none
Nappy, ale; to be tipsey
Negleckit, neglected
Neebor, a neighbour
Neuk, nook
Niest, next
Nieve, the fist
Nievefu', handful
Niffer, an exchange; to exchange, to barter
Niger, a negro
Nine-tailed-cat, a hangman's whip
Nit, a nut
Norland, of or belonging to the north
Notic't, noticed
Nowt, black cattle

O.

O', of
Ochels, name of mountains
Ony, or *onie*, any
O haith! O faith! an oath
Or, is often used for *ere*, before
O't, of it
Ourie, shivering, drooping
Oursel, or *oursels*, ourselves
Outlers, cattle not housed
Ower, over, too
Owre-hip, a way of fetching a blow with the hammer over the arm

P.

Pack, intimate, familiar; twelve stone of wool
Painch, paunch
Paitrick, a partridge
Pang, to cram
Parle, speech
Parritch, oatmeal pudding, a well-known Scotch dish
Pat, did put; a pot
Pattle, or *pettle*, a plough-staff
Paughty, proud, haughty
Pauky, cunning, sly
Pay't, paid, beat
Pech, to fetch the breath short, *as in an asthma*
Pechan, the crop, the stomach
Peelin, peeling
Pet, a domesticated sheep, &c.
Pettle, to cherish; a plough-staff
Philibegs, short petticoats worn by the Highlanders
Phraise, fair speeches, flattery; to flatter
Phraisin, flattery
Pickle, a small quantity
Pine, pain, uneasiness
Pit, to put
Placad, a public proclamation; to publish publicly
Plack, an old Scotch coin, the 3d part of a Scotch penny, 12 of which make an English penny
Plackless, pennyless, without money
Platie, dimin. of *plate*
Plew, or *pleugh*, a plough
Pliskie, a trick
Poind, to seize on cattle, or take the goods, as the laws of Scotland allow for rent
Poortith, poverty
Pou, to pull
Pouk, to pluck
Poussie, a hare, or cat
Pout, a poult, a chick
Pou't, did pull
Pouthery, like powder
Pow, the head, the skull
Pownie, a little horse
Powther, or *pouther*, powder
Preen, a pin
Prent, printing
Prie, to taste
Prie'd, tasted
Prief, proof
Prig, to cheapen, to dispute
Priggin, cheapening
Primsie, demure, precise
Propone, to lay down, to propose
Provoses, provosts
Pund, pound, pounds
Pyle, *a pyle o' caff*, a single grain of chaff

Q.

Quat, to quit
Quak, to quake
Quey, a cow from one to two years old

R.

Ragweed, herb, ragwort
Raible, to rattle nonsense
Rair, to roar

Raize, to madden, to inflame
Ram-feezl'd, fatigued, overspread
Ram-stam, thoughtless, forward
Raploch, *properly* a coarse cloth, *but used as an adnoun for* coarse
Rarely, excellently, very well
Rash, a rush; *rash-buss*, a bush of rushes
Ratton, a rat
Raucle, rash, stout, fearless
Raught, reached
Raw, a row
Rax, to stretch
Ream, cream; to cream
Reamin, brimful, frothing
Reave, rove
Reck, to heed
Rede, counsel; to counsel
Red-wat-shod, walking in blood over the shoe tops
Red-wud, stark mad
Ree, half drunk, fuddled
Reek, smoke
Reekin, smoking
Reekit, smoked, smoky
Remead, remedy
Requite, requited
Rest, to stand restive
Restit, stood restive, stunted, withered
Restricked, restricted
Rew, repent
Rief, *reef*, plenty
Rief randies, sturdy beggars
Rig, a ridge
Rin, to run, to melt; *runin*, running
Rink, the course of the stones, *a term in* curling on ice
Rip, a handful of unthreshed corn
Riskit, made a noise like the tearing of roots
Rockin, see App. *p.* 295.
Rood, stands likewise for the plural *roods*
Roon, a shred
Roose, to praise, to commend
Roun', round, in the circle of neighbourhood
Roupet, hoarse, *as with a cold*
Row, to roll, to wrap
Row't, rolled, wrapped
Rowte, to low, to bellow
Rowth, plenty
Rowth o' gear, plenty of goods
Rowtin, lowing
Rozet, rosin
Rung, a cudgel
Runt, the stem of colewort or cabbage
Runkled, wrinkled
Ruth, a woman's name; the book so called; sorrow

S.

Sae, so
Saft, soft
Sair, to serve; a sore
Sairly, or *sairlie*, sorely
Sair't, served
Sark, a shirt
Sarkit, provided in shirts
Saugh, the willow
Saul, soul
Saumont, salmon
Saunt, a saint
Saut, salt
Saw, to sow
Sawin, sowing
Sax, six
Scaith, to damage, to injure; injury
Scar, to scar; a scare
Scaud, to scald
Scauld, to scold
Scaur, apt to be scared
Scawl, a scold
Scon, a kind of bread
Sconner, a loathing; to loath
Scraich, to scream, *as a hen, partridge, &c.*
Screed, to tear; a rent
Scrieve, to glide swiftly along
Scrievin, gleesomely, swiftly
Scrimp, to scant
Scrimpet, did scant, scanty
See'd, did see
Seizen, seizing
Sel, self; *a body's sel*, one's self alone
Sell't, did sell
Sen', to send
Sen't, I, he, or she sent, or did send; send it
Servan', servant
Settlin, settling; *to get a settlin*, to be frighted into quietness
Sets, *sets off*, goes away
Shaird, a shred, a shard
Shangan, a stick cleft at one end for putting the tail of a dog, &c. into, by way of mischief, or to frighten him away
Shaver, a humourous wag, a barber
Shaw, to shew; a small wood in a hollow place
Sheen, bright, shining
Sheep-shank, *to think one's self nae sheep-shank*, to be conceited
Sherra-moor, Sheriffmoor, *the famous battle fought in the Rebellion*, A. D. 1715
Sheugh, a ditch, a trench, a sluice
Shiel, a shed
Shill, shrill
Shog, a shock, a push off at one side
Shool, a shovel
Shoon, shoes
Shore, to offer, to threaten
Shor'd, offered
Shouther, the shoulder
Sic, such
Sicker, sure, steady
Sidelins, sidelong, slanting
Siller, silver, money
Simmer, summer
Sin, a sun
Sin', since
Skaith, to damage, to injure; injury
Skeigh, proud, nice, high-mettled
Skellum, a worthless fellow
Skelp, to strike, to slap; to walk with a smart tripping step; a smart stroke
Skelpi-limmer, a technical term in female scolding
Skelpin, stappin, walking
Skiegh, proud, nice, high-mettled
Skinklin, a small portion
Skirl, to shriek, to cry shrilly
Skirling, shrieking, crying
Skirl't, shrieked
Sklent, slant; to run aslant, to deviate from truth
Sklented, ran, or hit, in an oblique direction
Skreigh, a scream; to scream
Slae, sloe
Slade, did slide
Slap, a gate, a breach in a fence
Slaw, slow
Slee, sly; *sleest*, slyest
Sleekit, sleek, shy
Sliddery, slippery
Slype, to fall over, *as a wet furrow from the plough*
Slypet, fell
Sma', small
Smeddum, dust, powder, mettle, sense
Smiddy, a smithy
Smoor, to smother
Smoor'd, smothered
Smautie, smutty, obscene, ugly
Smytrie, a numerous collection of small individuals
Snapper, stumble
Snash, abuse, Billingsgate
Snaw, snow; to snow
Snaw-boo, melted snow
Snawie, snowy
Sneck, a latch of a door
Sned, to lop, to cut off
Sneeshin, snuff
Sneeshin-mill, a snuff-box
Snell, bitter, biting
Snick-drawing, trick, contriving
Snick, the latchet of a door
Snool, one whose spirit is broken with oppressive slavery; to submit tamely, to sneak
Snoove, to go smoothly and constantly, to sneak
Snowk, to scent or snuff, *as a dog, horse, &c.*
Snowkit, scented, snuffed
Sonsie, having sweet engaging looks; lucky, jolly
Soom, to swim
Sooth, truth, a petty oath
Sowens, a dish made of oat-meal, the seeds of oat-meal sowred, &c. boiled up till they make an agreeable pudding

Sough, a sigh, a sound dying on the ear
Souple, flexible, swift
Souter, a shoemaker
Sowp, a spoonful, a small quantity of any thing liquid
Sowth, to try over a tune with a low whistle
Sowther, solder; to solder, to cement
Spae, to prophesy, to divine
Spaul, a limb
Spairge, to dash, to soil, *as with mire*
Spaviet, having the spavin
Speat, or *spate*, a sweeping torrent, after rain or thaw
Speel, to climb
Spence, the country parlour
Spier, to ask, to inquire
Spier't, inquired
Splatter, a splutter; to splutter
Spleughan, a tobacco-pouch
Splore, a frolic, a noise, riot
Sprattle, to scramble
Spreckled, spotted, speckled
Spring, a quick air in music, a Scottish reel
Sprit, a tough-rooted plant, something like rushes
Sprittie, full of sprits
Spunk, fire, mettle, wit
Spunkie, mettlesome, fiery; *will-o-wisp*, or *ignis-fatuus*
Spurtle, a stick used in making oat-meal pudding or porridge, a notable Scotch dish
Squad, a crew, a party
Squatter, to flutter in water, *as a wild duck*, &c.
Squattle, to sprawl
Squeel, a scream, a screech; to scream
Stacher, to stagger
Stack, a rick of corn, hay, &c.
Staggie, dimin. of *stag*
Stalwart, strong, stout
Stan't, to stand; *stan't*, did stand
Stane, a stone
Stank, did stink; a pool of standing water
Stap, stop
Stark, stout
Startle, to run *as cattle stung by the gadfly*
Staumrel, a blockhead, half-witted
Staw, did steal, to surfeit
Stech, to cram the belly
Stechin, cramming
Steek, to shut; a stitch
Steer, to molest, to stir
Steeve, firm, compacted
Stell, a still
Sten, to rear as a horse, to stride
Sten't, reared
Stents, tribute, dues of any kind
Stey, steep; *steyest*, steepest
Stibble, stubble; *stibble-rig*, the reaper in harvest who takes the lead
Stick an stow, totally, altogether
Stilt, a crutch; to halt, to limp
Stimpart, the eighth part of a Winchester bushel
Stirk, a cow or bullock a year old
Stock, a plant or root of colewort, cabbage, &c.
Stockin, stocking; *throwing the stockin'*, when the bride and bridegroom are put into bed, and the candle out, the former throws a stocking at random among the company, and the person whom it strikes is the next that will be married
Stooked, made up in shocks as corn
Stoor, sounding hollow, strong, and hoarse
Stot, an ox
Stoup, or *stowp*, a kind of jug or dish with a handle
Stoure, dust, *more particularly* dust in motion
Stowlins, by stealth
Stown, stolen
Stoyte, stumble
Strack, did strike
Strae, straw; *to die a fair strae death*, to die in bed
Straik, did strike
Straikit, stroked
Strappan, tall and handsome
Straught, straight
Streek, stretched, to stretch
Striddle, to straddle
Stroan, to spout, to piss
Studdie, an anvil
Stumpie, dimin. of *stump*
Strunt, spirituous liquor of any kind; to walk sturdily
Stuff, corn or pulse of any kind
Sturt, trouble; to molest
Sturtin, frighted
Sucker, sugar
Sud, should
Sugh, the continued rushing noise of wind or water
Suthron, southern, an old name for the English nation
Swaird, sward
Swall'd, swelled
Swank, stately, jolly
Swankie, or *swanker*, a tight strapping young fellow or girl
Swap, an exchange; to barter
Swarf, swoon
Swat, did sweat
Swatch, a sample
Swats, drink, good ale
Sweaten, sweating
Sweer, lazy, averse; *dead-sweer*, extremely averse
Swoor, swore, did swear
Swinge, to beat, to whip
Swirlie, knaggy, full of knots
Swirl, a curve, an eddying blast, or pool, a knot in wood
Swith, get away
Swither, to hesitate in choice; an irresolute wavering in choice
Syne, since, ago, then

T.

Tackets, a kind of nails for driving into the heels of shoes
Tae, a toe; *three tae'd*, having three prongs
Tairge, target
Tak, to take; *takin*, taking
Tantallan, the name of a mountain
Tangle, a sea-weed
Tap, the top
Tapetless, heedless, foolish
Tarrow, to murmur at one's allowance
Tarrow't, murmured
Tarry-breeks, a sailor
Tauld, or *tald*, told
Taupie, a foolish thoughtless young person
Tauted, or *tautie*, matted together, *spoken of hair or wool*
Tawie, that allows itself peaceably to be handled, *spoken of a horse, cow, &c.*
Teat, a small quantity
Tedding, spreading after the mower
Ten-hours-bite, a slight feed to the horses while in the yoke, in the forenoon
Tent, a field pulpit, heed, caution, to take heed
Tentie, heedful, cautious
Tentless, heedless
Teugh, tough
Thack, thatch; *thack an rape*, clothing, necessaries
Thae, these
Thairms, small guts, fiddle-strings
Thankit, thanked
Theckit, thatched
Thegither, together
Themsel, themselves
Thick, intimate, familiar
Thieveless, cold, dry, spited, *spoken of a person's demeanour*
Thir, these
Thirl, to thrill
Thirled, thrilled, vibrated
Thole, to suffer, to endure
Thowe, a thaw; to thaw
Thowless, slack, lazy
Thrang, throng, a crowd
Thrapple, throat, windpipe
Thraw, to sprain, to twist, to contradict
Thrawin, twisting, &c.
Thrawn, sprained, twisted, contradicted; contradiction
Threap, to maintain by dint of assertion
Threshin, thrashing
Thretcen, thirteen
Thristle, thistle
Through, to go on with, to make out
Throuther, pell-mell, confusedly

Thud, to make a loud intermittent noise
Thumpit, thumped
Thysel, thyself
Till't, to it
Timmer, timber
Tine, to lose; *tint*, lost; *tint the gate*, lost the way
Tinkler, a tinker
Tip, a ram
Tippence, two-pence
Tirl, to make a slight noise, to uncover
Tirlin, uncovering
Tither, the other
Tittle, to whisper
Tittlin, whispering
Tocher, marriage portion
Tod, a fox
Toddle, to totter, like the walk of a child
Toddlin, tottering
Toom, empty
Toop, a ram
Toun, a hamlet, a farm-house
Tout, the blast of a horn, or trumpet; to blow a horn, &c.
Tow, a rope
Towmond, a twelve-month
Towzie, rough, shaggy
Toy, a very old fashion of female head-dress
Toyte, to totter like old age
Transmugrify'd, transmigrated, metamorphosed
Trashtrie, trash
Trews, trowsers
Trickie, full of tricks
Trig, spruce, neat
Trimly, excellently
Trow, to believe
Trowth, truth, a petty oath
Trysted, appointed; *to tryste*, to make an appointment
Try't, tryed
Tug, raw hide, of which in old times plough traces were frequently made
Tulzie, a quarrel; to quarrel, to fight
Twa, two
Twa-three, a few
'Twad, it would
Twal, twelve; *twal-pennie worth*, a small quantity, a penny-worth

N. B. *One penny English, is* 12*d. Scotch*
Twin, to part
Tyke, a dog

U.

Unco, strange, uncouth; very, very great, prodigious
Uncos, news
Unkenn'd, unknown
Unsicker, unsure, unsteady
Unskaith'd, undamaged, unhurt
Unweeting, unwotting, unknowing
Upo', upon
Urchin, a hedge-hog

V.

Vap'rin, vapouring
Vera, very
Virl, a ring round a column, &c.

W.

Wa', wall; *wa's*, walls
Wabster, a weaver
Wad, would, to bet; a bet, a pledge
Wadna, would not
Wae, woe, sorrowful
Waesucks! or *waes me!* alas! O the pity!
Waft, woof, the cross thread that goes from the shuttle through the web
Waifu', wailing
Wair, to lay out, to expend
Wale, choice; to chuse
Wal'd, chose, chosen
Walie, ample, large, jolly; *also an interjection of distress*
Wame, the belly
Wamefou, a belly-full
Wanchansie, unlucky
Wanerestfu', restless
Wark, work
Wark-lume, a tool to work with
Warl, or *warld*, world
Warlock, a wizzard
Warly, worldly, [illegible] on amassing wealth
Warran, a warrant; to warrant
Warst, worst
Warstle, wrestling, struggle
Warstl'd, or *warsl'd*, wrestled
Wastrie, prodigality
Wat, wet; *I wat*, *I wot*, I know
Water-brose, brose made of meal and water simply, without the additions of milk, butter, &c.
Wattle, a twig, a wand
Wauble, to swing, to reel
Waught, draught
Waukit, thickened *as fullers do cloth*
Waukrife, not apt to sleep
Waur, worse; to worst
Waur't, worsted
Wean, or *weanie*, a child
Wearie, or *weary; many a wearie body*, many a different person
Weason, weasand
Weaving the stockin, See *Throwing the Stocking*, page 332
Wee, little; *wee things*, little ones; *wee bit*, a small matter
Weel, well; *weelfare*, welfare
Weet, rain, wetness
Weird, fate
We'se, we shall
Wha, who
Whaizle, to wheeze
Whalpit, whelped
Whang, a leathern string, a piece of cheese, bread, &c.; to give the strappado
Whare, where; *whare'er*, wherever
Wheep, to fly nimbly, to jerk; *penny-wheep*, small-beer
Whase, whose
Whatreck, nevertheless
Whid, the motion of a hare, running but not frighted, a lie
Whidden, running as a hare or coney
Whigmeleeries, whims, fancies, crotchets
Whingin, crying, complaining, fretting
Whirligigums, useless ornaments, trifling appendages
Whissle, a whistle; to whistle
Whisht, silence, *to hold one's whist*, to be silent
Whisk, to sweep, to lash
Whiskit, lashed
Whitter, a hearty draught of liquor
Whun-stane, a whin-stone
Whyles, whiles, sometimes
Wi', with
Wick, to strike a stone in an oblique direction, *a term in curling*
Wicker, willow (the smaller sort)
Wiel, a small whirl-pool
Wifie, a dimin. *or endearing term for* wife
Wimple, to meander
Wimpl't, meandered
Wimplin, waving, meandering
Win, to wind, to winnow
Win't, winded, *as a bottom of yarn*
Win', wind; *win's*, winds
Winna, will not
Winnock, a window
Winsome, hearty, vaunted, gay
Wintle, a staggering motion; to stagger, to reel
Winze, an oath
Wiss, to wish
Withoutten, without
Wizen'd, hide-bound, dried, shrunk
Wonner, a wonder, a contemptuous appellation
Wons, dwells
Woo', wool
Woo, to court, to make love to
Woodie, a rope, *more properly one made of withs or willows*
Wooer-bab, the garter knotted below the knee with a couple of loops
Wordy, worthy
Worset, worsted
Wow, an exclamation of pleasure or wonder
Wrack, to teaze, to vex
Wud-mad, distracted
Wumble, a wimble
Wraith, a spirit, a ghost; an apparition exactly like a living person, whose appearance is said to forebode the person's approaching death
Wrang, wrong; to wrong

Wreeth, a drifted heap of snow
Wyle, beguile
Wyliecoat, a flannel vest
Wyte, blame; to blame

Y.

Ye, this pronoun is frequently used for thou
Yearns, longs much
Yearlings, born in the same year, coevals
Year, is used both for singular and plural years
Yell, barren, that gives no milk
Yerk, to lash, to jerk
Yerkit, jerked, lashed
Yestreen, yesternight
Yet, a gate, such as is usually at the entrance into a farm-yard or field
Yill, ale
Yird, earth
Yokin, yoking, a bout
Yont, beyond
Yoursel, yourself
Yowe, an ewe
Yowie, dimin. of *yowe*
Yule, Christmas

RELIQUES

OF

ROBERT BURNS;

CONSISTING CHIEFLY OF

ORIGINAL

LETTERS, POEMS, AND CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

ON

SCOTTISH SONGS.

COLLECTED AND PUBLISHED BY

R. H. CROMEK.

Ordain'd to fire th' adoring Sons of Earth
With every charm of wisdom and of worth;
Or, warm with Fancy's energy to glow,
And rival all but Shakspeare's name below.
Pleasures of Hope.

PREFACE.

ON an occasion of such delicacy as the presenting to the world another volume of the writings of *Robert Burns*, it becomes the Editor to account for his motives in undertaking the publication, and to explain his reasons for giving it in the form in which it now appears.

Whatever unhappiness the poet was in his lifetime doomed to experience, few persons have been so fortunate in a biographer as Burns. A strong feeling of his excellencies, a perfect discrimination of his character, and a just allowance for his errors, are the distinguishing features in the work of Dr. Currie, who

> "—With kind concern and skill has weav'd
> A silken web; and ne'er shall fade
> Its colours; gently has he laid
> The mantle o'er his sad distress,
> And *genius* shall the texture bless."

The same judgment and discretion which dictated the memoirs of the poet, presided also in the selection of his writings in the edition by Dr. Currie; of which it may justly be said, that whilst no production of Burns could be withdrawn from it without diminishing its value, nothing is there inserted which can render his works unworthy of the approbation of manly taste, or inconsistent with the delicacy of female virtue.

But although no reduction can be made from the published works of the poet, it will, it is hoped, appear from the following pages, that much may be added to them, not unworthy of his genius and character. Of these pieces, many had, from various causes, never occurred to the notice of Dr. Currie; whilst others have been given by him in a more imperfect state than that in which they will now appear.—These productions of the Scottish bard extend from his earliest to his latest years; and may be considered as the wild-flowers of his muse, which, in the luxuriant vigour of his fancy, he scattered as he passed along. They are the result of a most diligent search, in which I have used the utmost exertions; often walking to considerable distances, and to obscure cottages, in search of a single letter. Many of them have been obtained from the generous confidence and liberality of their possessors; some from the hands of careless indifference, insensible to their value; others were fast falling to decay, their very existence almost forgotten, though glowing with the vital warmth which is diffused through every line that the hand of the immortal bard has ever traced.—In this pursuit I have followed the steps of the poet, from the humble cottage in Ayrshire in which he was born, to the house in which he died at Dumfries.—I have visited the farm of Mossgiel, where he resided at the period of his first publication; I have traversed the scenes by the Ayr, the Lugar, and the Doon. Sacred haunts!

> "Where first grim nature's visage hoar
> Struck his young eye;"

—And have finally shared in the reverential feelings of his distinguished biographer*, over the hallowed spot where the ashes of the bard are deposited†.

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* The above passage has a reference to a letter from Dr. Currie to Messrs. Cadell and Davies, which has been communicated to the Editor, and of which the following is an extract.

June 13, 1804.

"On my late excursion I visited Mrs. Burns at Dumfries. She continues to live in the house in which the poet died, and every thing about her bespoke decent competence, and even comfort. She shewed me the study and small library of her husband nearly as he left them. By every thing I hear, she conducts herself irreproachably.

"From Mrs. Burns's house my son and I went to the church-yard at no great distance, to visit the grave of the poet. As it is still uninscribed we could not have found it, had not a person we met with in the church-yard pointed it out. He told us he knew Burns well, and that he (Burns) himself chose the spot in which he is buried.—His grave is on the north-east corner of the church-yard, which it fills up; and at the side of the grave of his two sons, Wallace and Maxwell, the first of whom, a lad of great promise, died last year of a consumption, the last immediately after his father. The spot is well situated for a monument, for which there is money collected, but the subscribers, I understand, cannot agree as to the design."

† On this little pilgrimage I was accompanied

It must not however be supposed, that the present volume contains the whole, or nearly the whole of the writings of Burns, which have come under my eye, or fallen into my hands; much less have I thought it justifiable to reprint those exceptionable pieces, in prose and verse, which have been surreptitiously published, or erroneously attributed to him, and which in every point of view ought to have been consigned to oblivion. Notwithstanding the vigour which characterises all his productions, perhaps there is no author whose writings are so difficult to select with a view to publication as Burns; and the very strength and exuberance by which they are marked, are in no small degree the cause of this difficulty. Whatever was the object, or the idea, of the moment, he has delineated, or expressed it, with a force and a vivacity that brings it before us in all its beauty, or all its deformity. But the subjects of his pen were almost as various as nature herself; and hence it follows, that some of his compositions must be discarded, as inconsistent with that decorum which is due to the public at large. In his early years, Burns had imbibed a strong attachment to the unfortunate house of Stuart, which he seems to have cherished as a patriotic feeling; and as whatever he felt, he felt strongly, his prejudices occasionally burst forth in his writings; and some compositions of his yet remain, the publication of which, although in these days perfectly harmless, might render the Editor obnoxious to the letter, though not to the spirit of the law. If the affections of Burns were ardent, his animosities were scarcely less so; and hence some of his pieces display a spirit of resentment, the result of the moment, which it would be unjust to his memory, as well as to the object of his satire, to revive. These and various other causes, on which it would be tedious to dwell, have imposed difficulties upon me from which I have endeavoured to extricate myself according to the best of my judgment. If, on the one hand, with the example of the former Editor before my eyes, I have rejected whatever I conceived might in any point of view be improper for the public eye, I have, on the other hand, been anxious not to deprive the author, through too fastidious an apprehension of indecorum, of those peculiar marks, and that masculine freedom of thought and expression, which so strongly characterise his works. Nor have I in this respect trusted wholly to my own judgment and feelings. Several persons, some of them most nearly connected by the ties of relationship with the poet, others distinguished by their literary attainments, and their well known admiration of his works, have also been consulted. But though I have availed myself of this assistance to the utmost of my power, and "though I love the man, and do honour his memory on this side idolatry as much as any," yet as on many occasions I must exercise my own judgment and discretion, I know not whether the warmth of my attachment to the poet and his productions, may not have led me to publish sentiments and pieces which would have been better withheld, and even letters and poems, to which an ardent admiration of their author may have induced me to attach a fancied value and interest. I can however assure the reader, that whatever may be thought of the following collection, I have neither forgotten, nor been indifferent to the apprehensions so strongly expressed by Burns, in nearly his last moments; "that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him to the injury of his future reputation; that letters and papers, written with unguarded and improper freedom, and which he earnestly wished to have buried in oblivion, would be handed about by idle vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent the censures of shrill-tongued malice, or the insidious sarcasms of envy, from pouring forth all their venom to blast his fame*." On the contrary, I must be allowed to say, that if I am at all accurate in my estimate of the character and feelings of this extraordinary but eccentric genius, I have printed no one piece of his composition that he would have been ashamed to acknowledge, and that in this publication, I have been actuated only by an earnest desire of preserving such of the writings of Burns, and such only, as do honour to the poet's head, or to his heart; or that are immediately or remotely connected with the circumstances of his life, or the developement of his character.

To one whose admiration of the bard was less ardent than mine, it might have occurred that some of his pieces, containing passages of great beauty, were rendered inadmissible merely by a single indelicate sentiment, or unguarded expression, which it might be easy to alter, so as to preserve the whole. But from such a presumption as the substituting a word of my own in the place of that of the poet, (except in a very few instances of evident error) I have most religiously abstained; and have in such cases rather chosen to omit the passage, or even to sacrifice the piece altogether, than attempt to remove its blemishes. If indeed I could ever have entertained any doubts as to the sacred duty of fidelity to my author, the warning voice which yet seems to issue from the warm ashes of the poet himself, would effectually have deterred me. "To mangle the works† of the poor bard, whose tuneful voice is now mute for ever in the dark and narrow house—by Heaven, 'twould be sacrilege† !"

My readers will however best judge how far my exertions are intitled to their approbation. As an apology for any defects of my own that may appear in this publication, I beg to observe, that I am by profession an artist, and not an author.

by Mr. *James M'Clure*, a man who, by his punctuality, his integrity, his benevolence, and the uniform uprightness of his character, confers respectability on the humble situation of a letter-carrier. He was the constant and faithful friend of the poet, and since his death has been most active and successful in his endeavours to promote the interests of the family.

* Burns's Works, p. 103.

† Burns's Works, p. 48.

An earnest wish to possess a scrap of the handwriting of Burns, originally led to the discovery of most of the papers that compose this volume. In the manner of laying them before the public I honestly declare that I have done my best; and I trust I may fairly presume to hope, that the man who has contributed to extend the bounds of literature by adding another genuine volume to the writings of Robert Burns, has some claim on the gratitude of his countrymen. On this occasion, I certainly feel something of that sublime and heart-swelling gratification, which he experiences, who casts another stone on the *cairn* of a great and lamented chief.

R. H. C.

Newman Street,
1st Nov. 1808.

LETTERS, &c.

No. I.

To Mr. JOHN RICHMOND, Edinburgh.

Mosgiel, Feb. 17, 1786.

My dear sir,

I have not time at present to upbraid you for your silence and neglect; I shall only say I received yours with great pleasure. I have enclosed you a piece of rhyming ware for your perusal. I have been very busy with the muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, *The Ordination*, a poem on Mr. M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; *Scotch Drink*, a poem; *The Cotter's Saturday Night; An Address to the Devil*, &c. I have likewise completed my poem on the *Dogs*, but have not shewn it to the world. My chief patron now is Mr. Aiken in Ayr, who is pleased to express great approbation of my works. Be so good as send me Fergusson, by Connel*, and I will remit you the money. I have no news to acquaint you with about Mauchline, they are just going on in the old way. I have some very important news with respect to myself, not the most agreeable, news that I am sure you cannot guess, but I shall give you the particulars another time. I am extremely happy with Smith†; he is the only friend I have *now* in Mauchline. I can scarcely forgive your long neglect of me, and I beg you will let me hear from you regularly by Connel. If you would act your part as a *friend*, I am sure neither *good* nor *bad* fortune should strange or alter me. Excuse haste, as I got yours but yesterday.—I am,

My dear sir,

Yours,

ROBERT BURNESS‡.

* *Connel*, the Mauchline carrier.

† Mr. *James Smith*, then a shop-keeper in Mauchline. It was to this young man that Burns addressed one of his finest performances—"To J. S——," beginning,

"*Dear S——, the sleest, paukie thief.*"

He died in the West-Indies.

‡ This is the only letter the Editor has met with in which the poet adds the termination *ess* to his name, as his father and family had spelled it.

No. II.

To Mr. M'W———IE, Writer, Ayr.

Mosgiel, 17th April, 1786.

It is injuring *some* hearts, those hearts that *elegantly* bear the impression of the good Creator, to say to them you give them the trouble of obliging a friend; for this reason, I only tell you that I gratify my *own* feelings in requesting your friendly offices with respect to the inclosed, because I know it will gratify *yours* to assist me in it to the utmost of your power.

I have sent you four copies, as I have no less than eight dozen, which is a great deal more than I shall ever need.

Be sure to remember a poor poet militant in your prayers. He looks forward with fear and trembling to that, to him, important moment which stamps the *die* with—with—with, perhaps the eternal disgrace of,

My dear sir,

Your humbled,

afflicted,

tormented,

ROBERT BURNS.

No. III.

To Mons. James Smith, Mauchline.

Monday Morning, Mosgiel, 1786.

My dear sir,

I went to Dr. Douglas yesterday, fully resolved to take the opportunity of Capt. Smith; but I found the doctor with a Mr. and Mrs. White, both Jamaicians, and they have deranged my plans altogether. They assure him that to send me from Savannah la Mar to Port Antonio will cost my master, Charles Douglas, upwards of fifty pounds; besides running the risk of throwing myself into a pleuritic fever in consequence of hard travelling in the sun. On these accounts, he refuses sending me with Smith, but a vessel sails from Greenock the first of September, right for the place of my destination. The captain of her is an intimate of Mr. Gavin Hamilton's, and as good a fellow as heart could wish: with him I am destined to go. Where I shall shelter, I know

not, but I hope to weather the storm. Perish the drop of blood of mine that fears them! I know their worst, and am prepared to meet it.—

I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow.

On Thursday morning, if you can muster as much self-denial as to be out of bed about seven o'clock, I shall see you as I ride through to Cumnock. After all, Heaven bless the sex! I feel there is still happiness for me among them.—

O woman, lovely woman! Heaven designed you
To temper man! we had been brutes without you!

No. IV.

To Mr. DAVID BRICE.

Mosgeil, June 12, 1786.

Dear Brice,

I received your message by G. Paterson, and as I am not very throng at present. I just write to let you know that there is such a worthless, rhyming reprobate, as your humble servant, still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say, in the place of hope. I have no news to tell you, that will give me any pleasure to mention or you to hear.

* * * *

And now for a grand cure; the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then, farewell dear old Scotland, and farewell dear ungrateful Jean, for never, never will I see you more.

You will have heard that I am going to commence *poet* in print; and to-morrow my works go to the press. I expect it will be a volume of about two hundred pages—it is just the last foolish action I intend to do; and then turn a wise man as *fast as possible.*

Believe me to be,
Dear Brice,
Your friend and well-wisher.

No. V.

To GAVIN HAMILTON, esq. Mauchline.

Edinburgh, Dec. 7, 1786.

Honoured sir,

I have paid every attention to your commands, but can only say, what perhaps you will have heard before this reach you, that Muirkirklands were bought by a John Gordon, W. S., but for whom I know not; Mauchlands, Haugh Miln, &c. by a Frederick Fotheringham, supposed to be for Ballochmyle laird, and Adamhill and Shawood were bought for Oswald's folks.—This is so imperfect an account, and will be so late ere it reach you, that, were it not to discharge my conscience, I would not trouble you with it; but after all my diligence I could make it no sooner nor better.

For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas a Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birth-day inserted among the wonderful events, in the poor Robin's and Aberdeen Almanacks, along with the Black Monday, and the battle of Bothwel bridge.—My lord Glencairn, and the dean of faculty, Mr. H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth worthy, and the eighth wise man of the world. Through my lord's influence it is inserted in the records of the Caledonian hunt, that they universally, one and all, subscribe for the second edition.—My subscription bills come out to-morrow, and you shall have some of them next post.—I have met in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, what Solomon emphatically calls, "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."—The warmth with which he interests himself in my affairs, is of the same enthusiastic kind which you, Mr. Aiken, and the few patrons that took notice of my earlier poetic days, showed for the poor unlucky devil of a poet.

I always remember Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy in my poetic prayers, but *you* both in prose and verse.

May cauld ne'er catch you but* a hap,
Nor hunger but in plenty's lap!
Amen!

No. VI.

To Dr. M'KENZIE, Mauchline.

Inclosing him the extempore verses on dining with lord Daer.

Wednesday morning.

Dear sir,

I never spent an afternoon among great folks with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honour of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man, the professor†. I would be delighted to see him perform acts of kindness and friendship, though I were not the object; he does it with such a grace. I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus—four parts Socrates—four parts Nathaniel—and two parts Shakspeare's Brutus.

The foregoing verses were really extempore, but a little corrected since. They may entertain you a little with the help of that partiality with which you are so good as to favour the performances of

Dear sir,
Your very humble servant.

* "But" is frequently used for "without;" i. e. *without clothing.*

† Professor Dugald Stewart.

No. VII.

To JOHN BALLANTINE, esq. banker, Ayr.

Edinburgh, 13*th Dec.* 1786.

My honoured friend,

I would not write you till I could have it in my power to give you some account of myself and my matters, which, by the bye, is often no easy task.—I arrived here on Tuesday was se'nnight, and have suffered ever since I came to town with a miserable head-ache and stomach complaint, but am now a good deal better. I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me, I shall remember when time shall be no more. By his interest it is passed in the Caledonian hunt, and entered in their books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition, for which they are to pay one guinea. I have been introduced to a good many of the *noblesse*, but my avowed patrons and patronesses are, the duchess of Gordon; the countess of Glencairn, with my lord, and lady Betty*; the dean of faculty, sir John Whitefoord. I have likewise warm friends among the literati: professors Stewart, Blair, and Mr. M'Kenzie—the man of feeling. An unknown hand left ten guineas for the Ayrshire bard with Mr. Sibbald, which I got. I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, esq., brother to the justice clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him by invitation at his own house yesternight. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two, next post; when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr. Aiken. I saw his son to-day, and he is very well.

Dugald Stewart, and some of my learned friends, put me in the periodical paper called the Lounger*, a copy of which I here enclose you.—I was, sir, when I was first honoured with your notice, too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation.

I shall certainly, my ever honoured patron, write you an account of my every step; and better health and more spirits may enable me to make it something better than this stupid matter of fact epistle.

I have the honour to be,
Good sir,
Your ever grateful humble servant.

If any of my friends write me, my direction is, care of Mr. Creech, bookseller.

* Lady Betty Cunningham.

† The paper here alluded to, was written by Mr. M'Kenzie, the celebrated author of the Man of Feeling.

No. VIII*.

To Mr. WILLIAM CHALMERS, writer, Ayr.

Edinburgh, *Dec.* 27, 1786.

My dear friend,

I confess I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness—ingratitude to friendship—in not writing you sooner; but of all men living, I had intended to send you an entertaining letter; and by all the plodding, stupid powers, that in nodding, conceited majesty, preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily-solemn oath this!—I am, and have been, ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humour, as to write a commentary on the Revelation of St. John the divine, who was banished to the Isle of Patmos, by the cruel and bloody Domitian, son to Vespasian and brother to Titus, both emperors of Rome, and who was himself an emperor, and raised the second or third persecution, I forget which, against the Christians, and after throwing the said apostle John, brother to the apostle James, commonly called James the greater, to distinguish him from another James, who was, on some account or other, known by the name of James the less, after throwing him into a caldron of boiling oil, from which he was miraculously preserved, he banished the poor son of Zebedee, to a desart island in the Archipelago, where he was gifted with the second sight, and saw as many wild beasts as I have seen since I came to Edinburgh; which, a circumstance not very uncommon in story-telling, brings me back to where I set out.

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered; I enclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck.

One blank in the address to Edinburgh—"Fair B——," is heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honour to be more than once.

There has not been any thing nearly like her, in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the Great Creator has formed, since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

My direction is—care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge-street.

No. IX.

To JOHN BALLANTINE, esq.

Edinburgh, *Jan.* 14, 1787.

My honoured friend,

It gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not so far gone as Willie Gaw's skate, "past redemption†;" for I have still this

* This letter is now presented entire.

† This is one of a great number of old *saws* that Burns, when a lad, had picked up from his mother, of which the good old woman had a vast

favourable symptom of grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teazes me eternally till I do it.

I am still "dark as was chaos" in respect to futurity. My generous friend, Mr. Patrick Miller, has been talking with me about a lease of some farm or other in an estate called Dalswinton, which he has lately bought near Dumfries. Some life-rented embittering recollections whisper me that I will be happier any where than in my old neighbourhood, but Mr. Miller is no judge of land; and though I dare say he means to favour me, yet he may give me in his opinion an advantageous bargain, that may ruin me. I am to take a tour by Dumfries as I return, and have promised to meet Mr. Miller on his lands some time in May.

I went to a mason-lodge yesternight, where the most worshipful grand-master Charters, and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant; all the different lodges about town were present, in all their pomp. The grand master, who presided with great solemnity and honour to himself as a gentleman and mason, among other general toasts gave "Caledonia, and Caledonia's bard, brother B——," which rung through the whole assembly with multiplied honours and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunder-struck, and trembling in every nerve made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished, some of the grand officers said, so loud that I could hear, with a most comforting accent, "Very well, indeed!" which set me something to rights again.

* * * *

I have to-day corrected my 152d page. My best good wishes to Mr. Aiken.

I am ever,
Dear sir,
Your much indebted humble servant.

No. X.

TO THE SAME.

While here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits which the magic of that sound, auld toon o' Ayr, conjured up, I will send my last song to Mr. Ballantine.—Here it is—

Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon*,
How can ye blume sae fair;
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird
That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause luve was true.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird
That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wist na o' my fate.

Aft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
To see the wood-bine twine,
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Frae aff its thorny tree,
And my fause luver staw the rose,
But left the thorn wi' me.

collection. This venerable and most respectable person is still living, under the sheltering roof of her son Gilbert, on his farm, near Dumfries. E.

* The reader will perceive that the measure of this copy of the "Banks o' bonnie Doon," differs from that which is already published. Burns was obliged to adapt his words to a particular air, and in so doing, he lost much of the simplicity and beauty which the song possesses in its present state. E.

No. XI.

TO THE SAME.

Edinburgh, Feb. 24, 1787.

My honoured friend,

I will soon be with you now *in guid black prent;* in a week or ten days at farthest. I am obliged, against my own wish, to print subscribers' names, so if any of my Ayr friends have subscription bills, they must be sent into Creech directly. I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver; and if it can be ready in time, I will appear in my book looking, like other *fools*, to my title-page*.

I have the honour to be,
Ever your grateful, &c.

No. XII.

To Mr. JAMES CANDLISH,

Student in physic, College, Glasgow.

Edinburgh, March 21, 1787.

My ever dear old acquaintance,

I was equally surprised and pleased at your letter; though I dare say you will think by my delaying so long to write to you, that I am so drowned in the intoxication of good fortune as to be indifferent to old and once dear connexions. The truth is, I was determined to write a good letter, full of argument, amplification, erudition, and, as Bayes says, *all that.* I thought of it, and thought of it, but for my soul I cannot: and lest

* This portrait is engraved by Mr. Beugo, an artist who well merits the epithet bestowed on him by the poet, after a picture of Mr. Nasmyth, which he painted *con amore*, and liberally presented to Burns. This picture is of the cabinet size, and is now in the possession of Mr. Alex. Cunningham, of Edinburgh. E.

you should mistake the cause of my silence, I just sit down to tell you so. Don't give yourself credit though, that the strength of your logic scares me: the truth is, I never mean to meet you on that ground at all. You have shown me one thing which was to be demonstrated, that strong pride of reasoning, with a little affectation of singularity, may mislead the best of hearts. I likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in "the daring path Spinosa trod;" but experience of the weakness, not the strength, of human powers, made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.

I must stop, but don't impute my brevity to a wrong cause. I am still, in the apostle Paul's phrase, "the old man with his deeds," as when we were sporting about the lady thorn. I shall be four weeks here yet, at least; and so I shall expect to hear from you—welcome sense, welcome nonsense.

I am, with the warmest sincerity,
My dear old friend,
Yours.

No. XIII.

TO THE SAME.

My dear friend,

If once I were gone from this scene of hurry and dissipation, I promise myself the pleasure of that correspondence being renewed which has been so long broken. At present I have time for nothing. Dissipation and business engross every moment. I am engaged in assisting an honest Scots enthusiast*, a friend of mine, who is an engraver, and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen. This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly suited to my taste. I have collected, begged, borrowed, and stolen all the songs I could meet with. Pompey's Ghost, words and music, I beg from you immediately, to go into his second number: the first is already published. I shall show you the first number when I see you in Glasgow, which will be in a fortnight or less. Do be so kind as to send me the song in a day or two: you cannot imagine how much it will oblige me.

Direct to me at Mr. W. Cruikshank's, St. James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh.

No. XIV.

To WILLIAM CREECH, esq. *(of Edinburgh)*, London.

Selkirk, 13th May, 1787.

My honoured friend,

The enclosed I have just wrote, nearly extempore, in a solitary inn in Selkirk, after a miserable wet day's riding. I have been over most of East Lothian, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Selkirkshires; and next week I begin a tour through the north of England. Yesterday I dined with lady Hariot, sister to my noble patron*, *Quem Deus conservet!* I would write till I would tire you as much with dull prose, as I dare say by this time you are with wretched verse, but I am jaded to death; so, with a grateful farewell,

I have the honour to be,
Good sir, yours sincerely.

I.
Auld chuckie *Reekie's*† sair distrest,
Down droops her ance weel burnish't crest.
Nae joy her bonnie buskit nest
Can yield ava,
Her darling bird that she loes best,
Willie's awa!

II.
O Willie was a witty wight,
And had o' things an unco slight;
Auld Reekie aye he kept it tight,
And trig an' braw:
But now they'll busk her like a fright,
Willie's awa!

III.
The stiffest o' them a' he bow'd,
The bauldest o' them a' he cow'd;
They durst nae mair than he allow'd,
That was a law:
We've lost a birkie weel worth gowd,
Willie's awa!

IV.
Now gawkies, tawpies, gowks, and fools,
Frae colleges and boarding-schools,
May sprout like simmer puddock-stools
In glen or shaw;
He wha could brush them down to mools,
Willie's awa!

V.
The breth'ren o' the Commerce-Chaumer‡
May mourn their loss wi' doolfu' clamour;
He was a dictionar and grammar
Amang them a';
I fear they'll now mak mony a stammer
Willie's awa!

VI.
Nae mair we see his levee door
Philosophers and poets pour§,
And toothy critics by the score
In bloody raw!

* *Johnson*, the publisher of the Scots Musical Museum.

* James, earl of Glencairn.

† Edinburgh.

‡ The Chamber of Commerce of Edinburgh, of which Mr. C. was secretary.

§ Many literary gentlemen were accustomed to meet at Mr. C—'s house at breakfast. Burns often met with them there, when he called, and hence the name of *levee*.

The adjutant o' a' the core
Willie's awa!

VII.

Now worthy G*****'s Latin face,
T****r's and G*********'s modest grace;
M'K****e and S****t, such a brace
As Rome ne'er saw;
They a' maun meet some ither place,
Willie's awa!

VIII.

Poor Burns—e'en Scotch drink canna quicken,
He cheeps like some bewildered chicken,
Scar'd frae its minnie and the cleckin
By hoodie-craw;
Grief's gien his heart an unco kickin',
Willie's awa!

IX.

Now ev'ry sour-mou'd girnin' blellum,
And Calvin's fock, are fit to fell him;
And self-conceited critic skellum
His quill may draw;
He who could brawlie ward their bellum
Willie's awa!

X.

Up wimpling stately Tweed I've sped,
And Eden scenes on crystal Jed,
And Ettrick banks now roaring red
While tempests blaw;
But every joy and pleasure's fled
Willie's awa!

XI.

May I be slander's common speech;
A text for infamy to preach;
And lastly, streekit out to bleach
In winter snaw;
When I forget thee! Willie Creech,
Tho' far awa!

XII.

May never wicked fortune touzle him!
May never wicked man bamboozle him!
Until a pow as auld's Methusalem
He canty claw!
Then to the blessed, New Jerusalem
Fleet wing awa!

No. XV.

To Mr. W. NICOL,

Master of the High School, Edinburgh.

Carlisle, June 1, 1787.

Kind honest-hearted Willie,

I'm sitten down here, after seven and forty miles ridin, e'en as forjesket and forniaw'd as a forfoughten cock, to gie you some notion o' my land lowper-like stravaguin sin the sorrowfu' hour that I sheuk hands and parted wi' *auld Reekie*.

My auld, ga'd gleyde o' a meere has huchyall'd up hill and down brae, in Scotland and England, as teugh and birnie as a very devil wi' me*. It's true, she's poor's a sang-maker, and as hard's a kirk, and tipper-taipers when she taks the gate, first like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuwae, or a hen on a het girdle, but she's a yauld, poutherie Girran for a' that, and has a stomack like Willie Stalker's meere that wad hae disgeested tumbler-wheels, for she'll whip me aff her five stimparts o' the best aits at a down sittin, and ne'er fash her thumb. When ance her ringbanes and spavies, her crucks and cramps, are fairly soupl'd, she beets to, beets to, and aye the hindmost hour the tightest. I could wager her price to a thretty pennies that, for twa or three wooks ridin at fifty mile a day, the deilsticket a five gallopers acqueesh Clyde and Whithorn could cast saut on her tail.

I hae dander'd owre a' the kintra frae Dumbar to Selcraig, and hae forgather'd wi' mony a guid fallow, and monie a weelfar'd hizzie. I met wi' twa dink quines in particlar, ane o' them a sonsie, fine, fodgel lass, baith braw and bonnie; the tither was a clean-shankit, straught, tight, weelfar'd winch, as blythe's a lintwhite on a flowerie thorn, and as sweet and modest's a new blawn plumrose in a hazel shaw. They were baith bred to mainers by the beuk, and onie ane o' them had as muckle smeddum and rumblgumption as the half o' some presbytries that you and I baith ken. They play'd me sic a deevil o' a shavie that I daur say if my harigals were turn'd out, ye wad see two nicks i' the heart o' me like the mark o' a kail-whittle in a castock.

I was gaun to write you a lang pystle, but, Gude forgie me, I gat mysel sae notouriously bitchify'd the day after kail-time, that I can hardly stoiter but and ben.

My best respecks to the guidwife and a' our common friens, especiall Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank, and the honest guidman o' Jock's Lodge.

I'll be in Dumfries the morn gif the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale.

Gude be wi' you, Willie!

Amen!—

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* This mare was the poet's favourite Jenny Geddes.

This old faithful servant of the poet's was named by him, after the old woman, who, in her zeal against religious innovation, threw a stool at the dean of Edinburgh's head, when he attempted, in 1637, to introduce the Scottish *liturgy*. "On Sunday, the twenty-third of July, the dean of Edinburgh prepared to officiate in St. Giles's. The congregation continued quiet till the service began, when an old woman, impelled by sudden indignation, started up, and exclaiming aloud, 'villain! dost thou say the mass at my lug?' threw the stool on which she had been sitting, at the dean's head. A wild uproar commenced that instant. The woman invaded the desk with execrations and outcries, and the dean disengaged himself from his surplice to escape from their hands."—*Laing's History of Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 122. E.

No. XVI.

TO THE SAME.

Mauchline, June 18, 1787.

My dear friend,

I am now arrived safe in my native country, after a very agreeable jaunt, and have the pleasure to find all my friends well. I breakfasted with your gray-headed, reverend friend, Mr. Smith; and was highly pleased both with the cordial welcome he gave me, and his most excellent appearance and sterling good sense.

I have been with Mr. Miller at Dalswinton, and am to meet him again in August. From my view of the lands, and his reception of my bardship, my hopes in that business are rather mended; but still they are but slender.

I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks—Mr. Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, Gude forgie me, I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account. Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good humour, kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart; in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of any thing generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren, (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance), since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity; the intrepid, unyielding independence, the desperate, daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, Satan. 'Tis true, I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith; that noxious planet, so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe, I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon.—Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for the walks of business; add to all, that thoughtless follies and hare-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui*, eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till, pop, "he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again." God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me; but, should it not, I have very little dependance on mankind. I will close my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have in life, I have felt along the lines, and, d—n them! they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune; but from you, my ever dear sir, I look with confidence for the apostolic love that shall wait on me "through good report and bad report,"—the love which Solomon emphatically says, "is strong as death." My compliments to Mrs. Nicol, and all the circle of our common friends.

P. S. I shall be in Edinburgh about the latter end of July.

No. XVII.

To GAVIN HAMILTON, esq.

Stirling, 28th Aug. 1787.

My dear sir,

Here am I on my way to Inverness. I have rambled over the rich, fertile carses of Falkirk and Stirling, and am delighted with their appearance: richly waving crops of wheat, barley, &c. but no harvest at all yet, except in one or two places, an old wife's ridge.—Yesterday morning I rode from this town up the meandring Devon's banks to pay my respects to some Ayrshire folks at Harvieston. After breakfast, we made a party to go and see the famous Caudron-linn, a remarkable cascade in the Devon, about five miles above Harvieston; and after spending one of the most pleasant days I ever had in my life, I returned to Stirling in the evening. They are a family, sir, though I had not had any prior tie; though they had not been the brother and sisters of a certain generous friend of mine, I would never forget them. I am told you have not seen them these several years, so you can have very little idea of what these young folks are now. Your brother is as tall as you are, but slender rather than otherwise; and I have the satisfaction to inform you that he is getting the better of those consumptive symptoms, which I suppose you know were threatening him. His make, and particularly his manner, resemble you, but he will still have a finer face. (I put in the word *still*, to please Mrs. Hamilton.) Good sense, modesty, and at the same time a just idea of that respect that man owes to man, and has a right in his turn to exact, are striking features in his character; and, what with me is the alpha and the omega, he has a heart might adorn the breast of a poet! Grace has a good figure and the look of health and cheerfulness, but nothing else remarkable in her person. I scarcely ever saw so striking a likeness as is between her and your little Beennie; the mouth and chin particularly. She is reserved at first; but, as we grew better acquainted, I was delighted with the native frankness of her manner, and the sterling sense of her observation. Of Charlotte, I cannot speak in common terms of admiration: she is not only beautiful, but lovely. Her form is elegant; her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness and the settled complaceney of good nature in the highest degree; and her complexion, now that she has happily recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise of our riding to the falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr. Donne's mistress:

—— "Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say her body thought."

Her eyes are fascinating; at once expressive of good sense, tenderness, and a noble mind.

I do not give you all this account, my good sir, to flatter you. I mean it to reproach you. Such relations the first peer in the realm might own with pride; then why do you not keep up more correspondence with these so amiable young folks? I had a thousand questions to answer about you all: I had to describe the little ones with the minuteness of anatomy. They were highly delighted when I told them that John* was so good a boy, and so fine a scholar, and that Willie† was going on still very pretty; but I have it in commission to tell her from them, that beauty is a poor silly bauble without she be good. Miss Chalmers I had left in Edinburgh, but I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs. Chalmers, only lady M'Kenzie being rather a little alarmingly ill of a sore throat somewhat marred our enjoyment.

I shall not be in Ayrshire for four weeks. My most respectful compliments to Mrs. Hamilton, Miss Kennedy, and doctor M'Kenzie. I shall probably write him from some stage or other.

I am ever, sir,
Yours most gratefully.

The following fragments are all that now exist of twelve or fourteen of the finest letters that Burns ever wrote. In an evil hour, the originals were thrown into the fire by the late Mrs. Adair of Harrowgate; the *Charlotte* so often mentioned in this correspondence, and the lady to whom "*The Banks of the Devon*" is addressed. E.

No. XVIII.

To Miss MARGARET CHALMERS, *(now Mrs. Hay, of Edinburgh.)*

Sept. 26, 1787.

I send Charlotte the first number of the songs, I would not wait for the second number; I hate delays in little marks of friendship, as I hate dissimulation in the language of the heart. I am determined to pay Charlotte a poetic compliment, if I could hit on some glorious old Scotch air, in number second‡. You will see a small attempt on a shred of paper in the book; but, though Dr. Blacklock commended it very highly, I am not just satisfied with it myself. I intend to make it description of some kind: the whining cant of love except in real passion, and by a masterly hand, is to me as insufferable as the preaching cant of old father Smeaton, whig-minister at Kilmaurs. Darts, flames, cupids, loves, graces, and all that farrago, are just a Mauchline * * * * —a senseless rabble.

I got an excellent poetic epistle yesternight from the old, venerable author of Tullochgorum, John of Badenyon, &c. I suppose you know he is a clergyman. It is by far the finest compliment I ever got. I will send you a copy of it.

I go on Thursday or Friday to Dumfries to wait on Mr. Miller about his farms.—Do tell that to lady M'Kenzie, that she may give me credit for a little wisdom. "I wisdom dwell with prudence." What a blessed fire-side! How happy should I be to pass a winter evening under their venerable roof! and smoke a pipe of tobacco, or drink water-gruel with them! What solemn, lengthened, laughter-quashing gravity of phiz! What sage remarks on the good-for-nothing sons and daughters of indiscretion and folly! And what frugal lessons, as we straitened the fire-side circle, on the uses of the poker and tongs!

Miss N. is very well, and begs to be remembered in the old way to you. I used all my eloquence, all the persuasive flourishes of the hand, and heart-melting modulation of periods in my power, to urge her out to Harvieston, but all in vain. My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind. I have seen the day—but that is a "tale of other years."—In my conscience, I believe that my heart has been so oft on fire, that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night. I admire the beauty of the Creator's workmanship; I am charmed with the wild, but graceful eccentricity of their motions, and—wish them good night. I mean this with respect to a certain passion *dont j'ai eu l'honneur d'etre un miserable esclave:* as for friendship, you and Charlotte have given me pleasure, permanent pleasure, "which the world cannot give, nor take away," I hope; and which will outlast the heavens and the earth.

Without date.

I have been at Dumfries; and, at one visit more, shall be decided about a farm in that country. I am rather hopeless in it; but as my brother is an excellent farme , and is, besides, an exceedingly prudent, sober man, (qualities which are only a younger brother's fortune in our family), I am determined, if my Dumfries business fail me, to return into partnership with him, and at our leisure take another farm in the neighbourhood. I assure you I look for high compliments from you and Charlotte on this very sage instance of my unfathomable, incomprehensible wisdom. Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have, to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment, now completed. The air is admirable: tune, Old Highland. It was the tune of a Gælic song, which an Inverness lady sung me when I was there; and I was so charmed with it, that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing; for it never had been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number; so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time

* This is the "*wee curlie Johnnie*," mentioned in Burns's dedication to Gavin Hamilton, esq. To this gentleman, and every branch of the family, the editor is indebted for much information respecting the poet, and very gratefully acknowledges the kindness shown to himself.

† Now married to the Rev. John Tod, minister of Mauchline.

‡ Of the Scots Musical Museum.

in contradicting me. I won't say the poetry is first-rate; though I am convinced it is very well: and, what is not always the case with compliments to ladies, it is not only *sincere*, but *just*.

(Here follows the song of "The Banks of the Devon.")

Edinburgh, Nov. 21, 1787.

I have one vexatious fault to the kindly-welcome, well-filled sheet, which I owe to your and Charlotte's goodness—it contains too much sense, sentiment, and good spelling. It is impossible that even you two, whom I declare to my God, I will give credit for any degree of excellence the sex are capable of attaining, it is impossible you can go on to correspond at that rate; so, like those who, Shenstone says, retire because they have made a good speech, I shall after a few letters hear no more of you. I insist that you shall write whatever comes first: what you see, what you read, what you hear, what you admire, what you dislike, trifles, bagatelles, nonsense: or to fill up a corner, e'en put down a laugh at full length. Now none of your polite hints about flattery: I leave that to your lovers, if you have or shall have any; though, thank heaven, I have found at last two girls, who can be luxuriantly happy in their own minds and with one another, without that commonly necessary appendage to female bliss—a lover.

Charlotte and you are just two favourite resting places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny wilderness of this world—God knows I am ill fitted for the struggle: I glory in being a poet, and I want to be thought a wise man—I would fondly be generous, and I wish to be rich. After all, I am afraid I am a lost subject. "Some folk hae a hantle o' fauts, an' I'm but a ne'er-do-weel."

Afternoon.—To close the melancholy reflections at the end of last sheet, I shall just add a piece of devotion, commonly known in Carrick by the title of the "Wabster's grace."

"Some say we're thieves, and e'en sae are we!
Some say we lie, and e'en sae do we!
Gude forgie us, and I hope sae will he!
——Up and to your looms, lads."

Edinburgh, Dec. 12, 1787.

I am here under the care of a surgeon, with a bruised limb extended on a cushion; and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a midnight thunder-storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell, and myself, have formed a "quadruple alliance" to guarantee the other. I got my fall on Saturday, and am getting slowly better.

I have taken tooth and nail to the bible, and am got through the five books of Moses, and half way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book. I sent for my book-binder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town; and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.

I would give my best song to my worst enemy, I mean the merit of making it, to have you and Charlotte by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit.

I inclose you a proof copy of the "Banks of the Devon," which present with my best wishes to Charlotte. The "Ochel-hills," you shall probably have next week for yourself. None of your fine speeches!

Edinburgh, Dec. 19, 1787.

I begin this letter in answer to yours of the 17th current, which is not yet cold since I read it. The atmosphere of my soul is vastly clearer than when I wrote you last. For the first time, yesterday I crossed the room on crutches. It would do your heart good to see my bardship, not on my *poetic*, but on my *oaken* stilts; throwing my best leg with an air! and with as much hilarity in my gait and countenance, as a May frog leaping across the newly harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth after the long-expected shower!

* * * *

I can't say I am altogether at my ease when I see any where in my path, that meagre, squalid, famine-faced spectre, poverty; attended, as he always is, by iron-fisted oppression, and leering contempt; but I have sturdily withstood his buffetings many a hard-laboured day already, and still my motto is—I dare! My worst enemy is *moi-même*. I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of imagination, whim, caprice, and passion; and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of wisdom, prudence, and fore-thought, move so very, very slow, that I am almost in a perpetual state of warfare, and, alas! frequent defeat. There are just two creatures that I would envy, a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desart shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear.

Edinburgh, March 14, 1788.

I know, my ever dear friend, that you will be pleased with the news when I tell you, I have at last taken a lease of a farm. Yesternight I completed a bargain with Mr. Miller, of Dalswinton, for the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, between five and six miles above Dumfries. I begin at Whitsunday to build a house, drive lime, &c., and heaven be my help! for it will take a strong effort to bring my mind into the routine of business. I have discharged all the army of my former pursuits, fancies, and pleasures; a motley host! and have literally and strictly retained only the idea of a few friends, which I have incorporated into a life-guard. I trust in Dr. Johnson's observation, "Where much is attempt-

ed, something is done." Firmness both in sufferance and exertion, is a character I would wish to be thought to possess; and have always despised the whining yelp of complaint, and the cowardly, feeble resolve.

* * * *

Poor Miss K. is ailing a good deal this winter, and begged me to remember her to you the first time I wrote you. Surely woman, amiable woman, is often made in vain! Too delicately formed for the rougher pursuits of ambition; too noble for the dirt of avarice, and even too gentle for the rage of pleasure: formed indeed for, and highly susceptible of enjoyment and rapture; but that enjoyment, alas! almost wholly at the mercy of the caprice, malevolence, stupidity, or wickedness of an animal at all times comparatively unfeeling, and often brutal.

Mauchline, 7th April, 1788.

I am indebted to you and Miss Nimmo for letting me know Miss Kennedy. Strange! how apt we are to indulge prejudices in our judgments of one another! Even I, who pique myself on my skill in marking characters; because I am too proud of my character as a man, to be dazzled in my judgment *for* glaring wealth; and too proud of my situation as a poor man to be biassed *against* squalid poverty; I was unacquainted with Miss K's very uncommon worth.

I am going on a good deal progressive in *mon grand but*, the sober science of life. I have lately made some sacrifices, for which, were I *viva voce* with you to paint the situation and recount the circumstances, you would applaud me.

No date.

Now for that wayward, unfortunate thing, myself. I have broke measures with * * * and last week I wrote him a frosty, keen letter. He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me upon his honour, that I should have the account on Monday; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me! a poor, d-mned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonizing sensibility, and bedlam passions!

"*I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to die!*" I had lately "a hairbreadth 'scape in th' imminent deadly breach" of love too. Thank my stars I got off heart-whole, "waur fleyd than hurt."—*Interruption.*

I have this moment got a hint * * * * * * * * * I fear I am something like—undone—but I hope for the best. Come, stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution! accompany me through this, to me, miserable world! You must not desert me! Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope. Seriously though, life at present presents me with but a melancholy path: but—my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on.

Edinburgh, Sunday.

To-morrow, my dear madam, I leave Edinburgh.

* * * *

I have altered all my plans of future life. A farm that I could live in, I could not find; and, indeed, after the necessary support my brother and the rest of the family required, I could not venture on farming in that style suitable to my feelings. You will condemn me for the next step I have taken. I have entered into the excise. I stay in the west about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks instructions; afterwards, for I get employ instantly, I go *où il plait à Dieu, —et mon roi.* I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of fortune's palace shall we enter in; but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get any thing to do. I wanted *un but*, which is a dangerous, an unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation; it is immediate bread, and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life: besides, the commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends.

No. XIX.

To Miss M——N.

Saturday noon, No. 2, St. James's Sqr. Newtown, Edinburgh.

Here have I sat, my dear madam, in the stony attitude of perplexed study, for fifteen vexatious minutes, my head askew, bending over the intended card; my fixed eye insensible to the very light of day poured around; my pendulous goose-feather, loaded with ink, hanging over the future letter; all for the important purpose of writing a complimentary card to accompany your trinket.

Compliments is such a miserable Greenland expression; lies at such a chilly polar distance from the torrid zone of my constitution, that I cannot, for the very soul of me, use it to any person for whom I have the twentieth part of the esteem, every one must have for you who knows you.

As I leave town in three or four days, I can give myself the pleasure of calling for you only for a minute. Tuesday evening, some time about seven, or after, I shall wait on you, for your farewell commands.

The hinge of your box, I put into the hands of the proper connoisseur. The broken glass, likewise, went under review; but deliberative wisdom thought it would too much endanger the whole fabric.

I am, dear madam,

With all sincerity of enthusiasm,

Your very humble servant.

No. XX.

To Mr. ROBERT AINSLIE, Edinburgh.

Edinburgh, Sunday morning, Nov. 23, 1787.

I beg, my dear sir, you would not make any appointment to take us to Mr. Ainslie's to-night. On looking over my engagements, constitution, present state of my health, some little vexatious soul concerns, &c., I find I can't sup abroad to-night.

I shall be in to-day till one o'clock if you have a leisure hour.

You will think it romantic when I tell you, that I find the idea of your friendship almost necessary to my existence.—You assume a proper length of face in my bitter hours of blue-devilism, and you laugh fully up to my highest wishes at my *good things*.—I don't know upon the whole, if you are one of the first fellows in God's world, but you are so to me. I tell you this just now in the conviction that some inequalities in my temper and manner may, perhaps, sometimes make you suspect that I am not so warmly as I ought to be

Your friend.

No. XXI.

To Miss CHALMERS.

Edinburgh, Dec. 1787.

My dear madam,

I just now have read yours. The poetic compliments I pay cannot be misunderstood. They are neither of them so particular as to point *you* out to the world at large; and the circle of your acquaintances will allow all I have said. Besides, I have complimented you chiefly, almost solely, on your mental charms. Shall I be plain with you? I will; so look to it. Personal attractions, madam, you have much above par; wit, understanding, and worth you possess in the first class. This is a cursed flat way of telling you these truths, but let me hear no more of your sheepish timidity. I know the world a little. I know what they will say of my poems; by second sight I suppose; for I am seldom out in my conjectures; and you may believe me, my dear madam, I would not run any risk of hurting you by an ill-judged compliment. I wish to show to the world, the odds between a poet's friends and those of simple prosemen. More for your information, *both* the pieces go in. One of them, "Where braving all the winter's harms," already set—the tune is Neil Gow's Lamentation for Abercarny; the other is to be set to an old Highland air in Daniel Dow's "Collection of ancient Scots music;" the name is *Ha a Chaillich air mo Dheidh*. My treacherous memory has forgot every circumstance about *Les Incas*, only I think you mentioned them as being in C———'s possession. I shall ask him about it. I am afraid the song of "Somebody" will come too late—as I shall, for certain, leave town in a week for Ayrshire, and from that to Dumfries, but there my hopes are slender. I leave my direction in town, so any thing, wherever I am, will reach me.

I saw yours to ———: it is not too severe, nor did he take it amiss. On the contrary, like a whipt spaniel, he talks of being with you in the Christmas days. Mr. —— has given him the invitation, and he is determined to accept of it. O selfishness! he owns, in his sober moments, that from his own volatility of inclination, the circumstances in which he is situated, and his knowledge of his father's disposition,—the whole affair is chimerical—yet he *will* gratify an idle *penchant* at the enormous, cruel expense, of perhaps ruining the peace of the very woman for whom he professes the generous passion of love! He is a gentleman in his mind and manners. *Tant pis!*—He is a volatile school-boy: the heir of a man's fortune, who well knows the value of two times two!

Perdition seize them and their fortunes, before they should make the amiable, the lovely ——— the derided object of their purse-proud contempt.

I am doubly happy to hear of Mrs. ———'s recovery, because I really thought all was over with her. There are days of pleasure yet awaiting her.

"As I cam in by Glenap,
I met with an aged woman;
She bade me cheer up my heart,
For the best o' my days was comin."

No. XXII.

To Mr. MORISON*, wright, Mauchline.

Ellisland, Jan. 22, 1788.

My dear sir,

Necessity obliges me to go into my new house, even before it be plaistered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think, will at farthest be my time, beyond which I cannot stay in this present house. If ever you wished to deserve the blessing of him that was ready to perish; if ever you were in a situation that a little kindness would have rescued you from many evils; if ever you hope to find rest in future states of untried being;—get these matters of mine ready. My servant will be out in the beginning of next week for the clock. My compliments to Mrs. Morison.

I am, after all my tribulation,
Dear sir,
Yours.

No. XXIII.

To Mr. JAMES SMITH, Avon Printfield, Linlithgow.

Mauchline, April 28, 1788.

Beware of your Strasburgh, my good sir! Look on this as the opening of a correspondence like the opening of a twenty-four gun battery!

* This article refers to chairs, and other articles of furniture which the poet had ordered.

There is no understanding a man properly, without knowing something of his previous ideas, (that is to say, if the man has any ideas; for I know many, who, in the animal muster, pass for men, that are the scanty masters of only one idea on any given subject, and by far the greatest part of your acquaintances and mine can barely boast of ideas, 1.25—1.5—1.75, or some such fractional matter); so to let you a little into the secrets of my pericranium, there is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.

" Bode a robe and wear it,"

Says the wise old Scots adage! I hate to presage ill luck; and as my girl has been *doubly* kinder to me than even the best of women usually are to their partners of our sex, in similar circumstances, I reckon on twelve times a brace of children against I celebrate my twelfth wedding day: these twenty-four will give me twenty-four gossippings, twenty-four christenings, (I mean one equal to two,) and I hope, by the blessing of the God of my fathers, to make them twenty-four dutiful children to their parents, twenty-four useful members of society, and twenty-four approven servants of their God! * * * * " Light's heartsome," quo' the wife, when she was stealing sheep. You see what a lamp I have hung up to lighten your paths, when you are idle enough to explore the combinations and relations of my ideas. 'Tis now as plain as a pike-staff, why a twenty-four gun battery was a metaphor I could readily employ.

Now for business.—I intend to present Mrs. Burns with a printed shawl, an article of which I dare say you have variety: 'tis my first present to her since I have *irrevocably* called her mine, and I have a kind of whimsical wish to get her the said first present from an old and much valued friend of her's and mine, a trusty *Trojan*, on whose friendship I count myself possessed of a life-rent lease.

* * * *

Look on this letter as a " beginning of sorrows;" I'll write you till your eyes ache with reading nonsense.

Mrs. Burns ('tis only her private designation) begs her best compliments to you.

No. XXIV.

To Mr. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Mauchline, May 26, 1788.

My dear friend,

I am two kind letters in your debt, but I have been from home, and horridly busy buying and preparing for my farming business; over and above the plague of my excise instructions, which this week will finish.

As I flatter my wishes that I foresee many future years correspondence between us, 'tis foolish to talk of excusing dull epistles: a dull letter may be a very kind one. I have the pleasure to tell you that I have been extremely fortunate in all my buyings and bargainings hitherto; Mrs. Burns not excepted; which title I now avow to the world. I am truly pleased with this last affair: it has indeed added to my anxieties for futurity, but it has given a stability to my mind and resolutions, unknown before; and the poor girl has the most sacred enthusiasm of attachment to me, and has not a wish but to gratify my every idea of her deportment*.

I am interrupted.

Farewell! my dear sir.

No. XXV.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, June 14, 1788.

This is now the third day, my dearest sir, that I have sojourned in these regions; and, during these three days, you have occupied more of my thoughts than in three weeks preceding: in Ayrshire I have several *variations* of friendship's compass, here it points invariably to the pole.—My farm gives me a good many uncouth cares and anxieties, but I hate the language of complaint. Job, or some one of his friends, says well—" Why should a living man complain?"

I have lately been much mortified with contemplating an unlucky imperfection in the very framing and construction of my soul; namely, a blundering inaccuracy of her olfactory organs in hitting the scent of craft or design in my fellow creatures. I do not mean any compliment to my ingenuousness, or to hint that the defect is in consequence of the unsuspicious simplicity of conscious truth and honour: I take it to be, in some way or other, an imperfection in the mental sight; or, metaphor apart, some modification of

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* A passage has been omitted in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop. (See General Correspondence, No. LIII.) This passage places *Mrs. Burns* in so interesting a point of view, that it must be preserved.

" To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger: my preservative from the first is a most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honour, and her attachment to me; my antidote against the last, is my long and deep-rooted affection for her.

" In housewife matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute, she is eminently mistress: and, during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business.

" The Muses must not be offended when I tell them, the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas;* but I assure them, their ladyships will ever come next in place.

" You are right that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have have been of the number * * * *."

dulness. In two or three small instances lately, I have been most shamefully out.

I have all along, hitherto, in the warfare of life, been bred to arms among the light-horse—the piquet-guards of fancy; a kind of hussars and Highlanders of the *brain*; but I am firmly resolved to *sell out* of these giddy battalions, who have no ideas of a battle but fighting the foe, or of a siege, but storming the town. Cost what it will, I am determined to buy in among the grave squadrons of heavy-armed thought, or the artillery corps of plodding contrivance.

What books are you reading, or what is the subject of your thoughts, besides the great studies of your profession? You said something about religion in your last. I don't exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire; but I thought it not only prettily said, but nobly thought. You will make a noble fellow if once you were married. I make no reservation of your being *well*-married: you have so much sense, and knowledge of human nature, that though you may not realize, perhaps, the ideas of romance, yet you will never be *ill-married*.

Were it not for the terrors of my ticklish situation respecting provision for a family of children, I am decidedly of opinion that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness. As it is, I look to the excise scheme as a certainty of maintenance; a maintenance, luxury to what either Mrs. Burns or I were born to.

Adieu.

No. XXVI.

TO THE SAME.

Ellisland, June 30, 1788.

My dear sir,

I just now received your brief epistle; and, to take vengeance on your laziness, I have, you see, taken a long sheet of writing paper, and have begun at the top of the page, intending to scribble on the very last corner.

I am vext at that affair of the * * * but dare not enlarge on the subject until you send me your direction, as I suppose that will be altered on your late master and friend's death. I am concerned for the old fellow's exit, only as I fear it may be to your disadvantage in any respect—for an old man's dying, except he have been a very benevolent character, or in some particular situation of life, that the welfare of the poor or the helpless depended on him, I think it an event of the most trifling moment to the world. Man is naturally a kind benevolent animal, but he is dropt into such a needy situation here in this vexatious world, and has such a whoreson, hungry, growling, multiplying pack of necessities, appetites, passions, and desires about him, ready to devour him for want of other food; that in fact he must lay aside his cares for others, that he may look properly to himself*. You have been imposed upon in paying Mr. M—— for the profile of a Mr. H. I did not mention it in my letter to you, nor did I ever give Mr. M—— any such order. I have no objection to lose the money, but I will *not* have any such profile in my possession.

I desired the carrier to pay you, but as I mentioned only 15*s.* to him, I will rather enclose you a guinea note. I have it not indeed to spare here, as I am only a sojourner in a strange land in this place; but in a day or two I return to Mauchline, and there I have the bank-notes through the house, like salt permits.

There is a great degree of folly in talking unnecessarily of one's private affairs. I have just now been interrupted by one of my new neighbours, who has made himself absolutely contemptible in my eyes, by his silly, garrulous pruriency. I know it has been a fault of my own too; but, from this moment, I abjure it, as I would the service of hell! Your poets, spendthrifts, and other fools of that kidney, pretend, forsooth, to crack their jokes on prudence, but 'tis a squalid vagabond glorying in his rags. Still, imprudence respecting money matters, is much more pardonable than imprudence respecting character. I have no objection to prefer prodigality to avarice, in some few instances; but I appeal to your observation, if you have not met, and often met, with the same little disingenuousness, the same hollow-hearted insincerity, and disintegritive depravity of principle, in the hackneyed victims of profusion, as in the unfeeling children of parsimony. I have every possible reverence for the much-talked-of world beyond the grave, and I wish that which piety believes and virtue deserves, may be all matter of fact.—But in things belonging to, and terminating in this present scene of existence, man has serious and interesting business on hand. Whether a man shall shake hands with welcome in the distinguished elevation of respect, or shrink from contempt in the abject corner of insignificance; whether he shall wanton under the tropic of plenty, at least enjoy himself in the comfortable latitudes of easy convenience, or starve in the arctic circle of dreary poverty; whether he shall rise in the manly consciousness of a self-approving mind, or sink beneath a galling load of regret and remorse—these are alternatives of the last moment.

You see how I preach. You used occasionally to sermonize too; I wish you would, in charity, favour me with a sheet full in your own way. I admire the close of a letter lord Bolingbroke writes dean Swift: "Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults I love thee entirely: make an effort to love me with all mine!" Humble servant, and all that trumpery, is now such a prostituted business, that honest friendship, in her sincere way, must have recourse to her primitive, simple—farewell!

No. XXVII.

To Mr. GEORGE LOCKHART, Merchant, Glasgow.

Mauchline, July 18, 1788.

My dear sir,

I am just going for Nithsdale, else I would certainly have transcribed some of my rhyming things

* A similar thought occurs in a letter to Mr. Hill—See General Correspondence, No. XCV.

for you. The miss Bailies I have seen in Edinburgh. "Fair and lovely are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Who would not praise Thee for these Thy gifts in Thy goodness to the sons of men!" It needed not your fine taste to admire them. I declare, one day I had the honour of dining at Mr. Bailie's, I was almost in the predicament of the children of Israel, when they could not look on Moses's face for the glory that shone in it, when he descended from Mount Sinai*.

I did once write a poetic address from the falls of Bruar to his grace of Athole, when I was in the Highlands. When you return to Scotland let me know, and I will send such of my pieces as please myself best.

I return to Mauchline in about ten days.

My compliments to Mr. Purden. I am in truth, but at present in haste,

Yours, sincerely.

No. XXVIII.

To Mr. BEUGO, Engraver, Edinburgh.

Ellisland, Sept. 9, 1788.

My dear sir,

There is not in Edinburgh above the number of the graces whose letters would have given me so much pleasure as yours of the 3d instant, which only reached me yesternight.

I am here on my farm, busy with my harvest; but for all that most pleasurable part of life called *social communication*, I am here at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country, in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting. Prose, they only know in graces, prayers, &c., and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiding webs—by the ell! As for the muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet. For my old capricious, but good-natured hussy of a muse—

By banks of Nith I sat and wept
When Coila I thought on,
In midst thereof I hung my harp
The willow trees upon.

I am generally about half my time in Ayrshire with my "darling Jean," and then I, at *lucid intervals*, throw my horny fist across my be-cobwebbed lyre, much in the same manner as an old wife throws her hand across the spokes of her spinning wheel.

I will send you "The Fortunate Shepherdess" as soon as I return to Ayrshire, for there I keep it with other precious treasure. I shall send it by a careful hand, as I would not for any thing it should be mislaid or lost. I do not wish to serve you from any benevolence, or other grave Christian virtue; 'tis purely a selfish gratification of my own feelings whenever I think of you.

* * *

If your better functions would give you leisure to write me, I should be extremely happy; that is to say, if you neither keep nor look for a regular correspondence. I hate the idea of being *obliged* to write a letter. I sometimes write a friend twice a week, at other times once a quarter.

I am exceedingly pleased with your fancy in making the author you mention place a map of Iceland instead of his portrait before his works: 'twas a glorious idea.

Could you conveniently do me one thing—Whenever you finish any head, I could like to have a proof copy of it. I might tell you a long story about your fine genius; but, as what every body knows cannot have escaped you, I shall not say one syllable about it.

No. XXIX.

To Miss CHALMERS, Edinburgh.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, Sept. 16, 1788.

Where are you? and how are you? and is lady M'Kenzie recovering her health? for I have had but one solitary letter from you. I will not think you have forgotten me, madam; and for my part—

"When thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand!"

"My heart is not of that rock, nor my soul careless as that sea." I do not make my progress among mankind, as a bowl does among its fellows—rolling through the crowd without bearing away any mark or impression, except where they hit in hostile collision.

I am here, driven in with my harvest-folks by bad weather; and as you and your sister once did me the honour of interesting yourselves much *à l'egard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness.—I can truly say that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two, whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say, more, but so much, as lady M'Kenzie and miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest, of human kind—unfortunate, even in the shades of life—when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days, than I can do with almost any body I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child!—If ever you honoured me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert.—I am secure against that crushing grip of iron poverty, which, alas! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls; and a late, important step in my life has

* One of Burns's remarks, when he first came to Edinburgh, was, that between the men of rustic life and the polite world he observed little difference—that in the former, though unpolished by fashion, and unenlightened by science, he had found much observation and much intelligence—but a refined and accomplished woman was a being almost new to him, and of which he had formed but a very inadequate idea. E.

kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however overlooked in fashionable license, or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of *villainy*.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire, I married "my Jean." This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance perhaps; but I had a long and much-loved fellow creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county. Mrs. Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit, et le plus honnete homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse.—I must except also from this last, a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly; and all the ballads in the country, as she has (O the partial lover! you will cry) the finest "wood-note wild" I ever heard.—I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have the honour of a share in your best wishes. She is still at Mauchline, as I am building my house; for this hovel that I shelter in, while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death, by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to expect, but I believe, in time, it may be a saving bargain. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle *eclat*, and bind every day after my reapers.

To save me from that horrid situation of at any time going down, in a losing bargain of a farm, to misery, I have taken my excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket for any emergency of fortune. If I could set *all* before your view, whatever disrespect you, in common with the world, have for this business, I know you would approve of my idea.

I will make no apology, dear madam, for this egotistic detail: I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness! When fellow partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at every thing dishonest, and the same scorn at every thing unworthy—if they are not in the dependance of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense are they not *equals?* And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls run the same way, why may they not be *friends?*

When I may have an opportunity of sending you this, Heaven only knows. Shenstone says, "When one is confined idle within doors by bad weather, the best antidote against *ennui* is, to read the letters of, or write to one's friends;" in that case, then, if the weather continues thus, I may scrawl you half a quire.

I very lately, to wit, since harvest began, wrote a poem, not in imitation, but in the manner of Pope's Moral Epistles. It is only a short essay, just to try the strength of my muse's pinion in that way. I will send you a copy of it, when once I have heard from you. I have likewise been laying the foundation of some pretty large poetic works: how the superstructure will come on I leave to that great maker and marrer of projects —*Time*. Johnson's collection of Scots songs is going on in the third volume; and of consequence finds me a consumpt for a great deal of idle metre.—One of the most tolerable things I have done in that way, is, two stanzas that I made to an air, a musical gentleman* of my acquaintance composed for the anniversary of his wedding-day, which happens on the seventh of November. Take it as follows:

The day returns—my bosom burns
The blissful day we twa did meet, &c.
See p. 302.

I shall give over this letter for shame. If I should be seized with a scribbling fit, before this goes away, I shall make it another letter; and then you may allow your patience a week's respite between the two. I have not room for more than the old, kind, hearty *farewell!*

To make some amends, *mes cheres mesdames*, for dragging you on to this second sheet; and to relieve a little the tiresomeness of my unstudied and uncorrectible prose, I shall transcribe you some of my late poetic bagatelles; though I have these eight or ten months done very little that way. One day, in a hermitage on the banks of Nith, belonging to a gentleman in my neighbourhood, who is so good as to give me a key at pleasure, I wrote as follows; supposing myself the sequestered, venerable inhabitant of the lonely mansion.

Lines written in Friar's Carse Hermitage†.
See p. 281.

No. XXX.

To Mrs. DUNLOP, of Dunlop.

Mauchline, 27th Sept. 1788.

I have received twins, dear madam, more than once; but scarcely ever with more pleasure than

* Capt. Riddel of Glenriddel.

† The poetic temperament is ever predisposed to sensations of the "horrible and awful." Burns, in returning from his visits at Glenriddel to his farm at Ellisland, had to pass through a little wild wood in which stood the hermitage. When the night was dark and dreary it was his custom generally to solicit an additional parting glass to fortify

when I received yours of the 12th instant. To make myself understood: I had wrote to Mr. Graham, inclosing my poem addressed to him, and the same post which favoured me with yours, brought me an answer from him. It was dated the very day he had received mine; and I am quite at a loss to say whether it was most polite or kind.

Your criticisms, my honoured benefactress, are truly the work of a *friend*. They are not the blasting depredations of a canker-toothed, caterpillar critic; nor are they the fair statement of cold impartiality, balancing with unfeeling exactitude, the pro and con of an author's merits; they are the judicious observations of animated friendship, selecting the beauties of the piece*. I have just arrived from Nithsdale, and will be here a fortnight. I was on horseback this morning by three o'clock; for between my wife and my farm is just forty-six miles. As I jogged on in the dark, I was taken with a poetic fit as follows:

"Mrs. F—— of C——'s lamentation for the death of her son; an uncommonly promising youth of eighteen or nineteen years of age."

Here follow the verses, entitled, "*A Mother's lament for the loss of her Son.*"

See p. 309.

You will not send me your poetic rambles, but you see I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your impromptus give me double pleasure; what falls from your pen, can neither be unentertaining in itself, nor indifferent to me.

The *one* fault you found, is just; but I cannot please myself in an emendation.

What a life of solicitude is the life of a parent! You interested me much in your young couple.

I would not take my folio paper for this epistle, and now I repent it. I am so jaded with my dirty long journey, that I was afraid to drawl into the essence of dulness with any thing longer than a quarto, and so I must leave out another rhyme of this morning's manufacture.

I will pay the sapientipotent George most cheerfully, to hear from you ere I leave Ayrshire.

No. XXXI.

To Mr. JAMES JOHNSON, Engraver, Edinburgh.

Mauchline, Nov. 15, 1788.

My dear sir,

I have sent you two more songs.—If you have got any tunes, or any thing to correct, please send them by return of the carrier.

I can easily see, my dear friend, that you will very probably have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account *lucratively*, in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country; and I am certain, posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry; let us go on correctly; and your name shall be immortal.

I am preparing a flaming preface for your third volume. I see, every day, new musical publications advertised; but what are they? Gaudy, hunted butterflies of a day, and then vanish for ever: but your work will outlive the momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of time.

Have you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-goose chase of amorous devotion? Let me know a few of her qualities, such as, whether she be rather black, or fair; plump, or thin; short, or tall, &c.; and chuse your air, and I shall task my muse to celebrate her.

No. XXXII.

To Dr. BLACKLOCK.

Mauchline, Nov. 15, 1788.

Rev. and dear sir,

As I hear nothing of your motions but that you are, or were, out of town, I do not know where this may find you, or whether it will find you at all. I wrote you a long letter, dated from the land of matrimony, in June; but either it had not found you, or, what I dread more, it found you or Mrs. Blacklock in too precarious a state of health and spirits, to take notice of an idle packet.

I have done many little things for Johnson, since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and I have finished one piece, in the way of Pope's *Moral*

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his spirits and keep up his courage. This was related by a lady, a near relation of capt. Riddel's, who had frequent opportunities of seeing this salutary practice exemplified. E.

* From a letter which is printed in Dr. Currie's collection, it appears that Burns entertained no great respect for what may be styled technical criticism. He loved the man who judged of poetical compositions from the heart—but looked with an evil eye upon those who decided by the cold decisions of the head. This is evinced by the following anecdote.

At a private breakfast in a literary circle at Edinburgh, to which he was invited, the conversation turned on the poetical merit and pathos of Gray's Elegy, a poem of which he was enthusiastically fond. A clergyman present, remarkable for his love of paradox and for his eccentric notions on every subject, distinguished himself by an injudicious and ill-timed attack on this exquisite poem, which Burns, with a generous warmth for the reputation of Gray, manfully defended. As this gentleman's remarks were rather general than specific, Burns urged him to bring forward the passages which he thought exceptionable. He made several attempts to quote the poem, but always in a blundering inaccurate manner. Burns bore all this for a considerable time with his usual good nature and forbearance; till, at length, goaded by the fastidious criticisms and wretched quibblings of his opponent, he roused himself, and with an eye flashing contempt and indignation, and with great vehemence of gesticulation, he thus addressed the old critic. "Sir,—I now perceive a man may be an excellent judge of poetry *by square and rule*, and after all,—be a d——d blockhead!" E.

Epistles; but from your silence, I have every thing to fear, so I have only sent you two melancholy things, which I tremble lest they should too well suit the tone of your present feelings.

In a fortnight I move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale: till then, my direction is at this place; after that period, it will be at Ellisland, near Dumfries. It would extremely oblige me, were it but half a line, to let me know how you are, and where you are.—Can I be indifferent to the fate of a man, to whom I owe so much? A man whom I not only esteem, but venerate*.

My warmest good wishes and most respectful compliments to Mrs. Blacklock, and miss Johnson, if she is with you.

I cannot conclude without telling you, that I am more and more pleased with the step I took respecting "my Jean."—Two things, from my happy experience, I set down as apothegms in life. A wife's head is immaterial, compared with her heart—and—"Virtue's (for wisdom what poet pretends to it) ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace."

Adieu!

* * * *

Here follow "*The mother's lament for the loss of her son*," and the song beginning "*The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill*."

See p. 302.

No. XXXIII.

To Mr. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Ellisland, Jan. 6, 1789.

Many happy returns of the season to you, my dear sir! May you be comparatively happy up to your comparative worth among the sons of men; which wish would, I am sure, make you one of the most blest of the human race.

I do not know if passing a "writer to the signet" be a trial of scientific merit, or a mere business of friends and interest. However it be, let me quote you my two favourite passages, which though I have repeated them ten thousand times, still they rouse my manhood and steel my resolution like inspiration.

> ——— On Reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man.
>
> *Young.*

> Hear, Alfred, hero of the state,
> Thy genius heaven's high will declare;
> The triumph of the truly great
> Is never, never to despair!
> Is never to despair!
>
> *Masque of Alfred.*

I grant you enter the lists of life, to struggle for bread, business, notice, and distinction, in common with hundreds.—But who are they? Men, like yourself, and of that aggregate body, your compeers, seven tenths of them come short of your advantages natural and accidental; while two of those that remain either neglect their parts, as flowers blooming in a desert, or misspend their strength, like a bull goring a bramble bush.

But to change the theme: I am still catering for Johnson's publication; and among others, I have brushed up the following old favourite song a little, with a view to your worship. I have only altered a word here and there; but if you like the humour of it, we shall think of a stanza or two to add to it.

* * * *

No. XXXIV.

To Mr. JAMES HAMILTON, Grocer, Glasgow.

Ellisland, May 26, 1789.

Dear sir,

I send you by John Glover, carrier, the above account for Mr. Turnbull, as I suppose you know his address.

I would fain offer, my dear sir, a word of sympathy with your misfortunes; but it is a tender string, and I know not how to touch it. It is easy to flourish a set of high-flown sentiments on the subject that would give great satisfaction to—a breast quite at ease; but as *one* observes, who was very seldom mistaken in the theory of life, "The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith."

Among some distressful emergencies that I have experienced in life, I ever laid this down as my foundation of comfort—*That he who has lived the*

* Gratefully alluding to the doctor's introduction of him to the literary circles of Edinburgh.—"There was, perhaps, never one among mankind," says Heron, in a spirited memoir of our bard, inserted in the Edinburgh Magazine, "whom you might more truly have called an *angel upon earth*, than Dr. Blacklock: he was guileless and innocent as a child, yet endowed with manly sagacity and penetration; his heart was a perpetual spring of overflowing benignity; his feelings were all tremblingly alive to the sense of the sublime, the beautiful, the tender, the pious, the virtuous.—Poetry was to him the dear solace of perpetual blindness; cheerfulness, even to gaiety, was, notwithstanding that irremediable misfortune, long the predominant colour of his mind. In his latter years, when the gloom might otherwise have thickened around him, hope, faith, devotion the most fervent and sublime, exalted his mind to Heaven, and made him maintain his wonted cheerfulness in the expectation of a speedy dissolution."—

In the beginning of the winter of 1786-87, Burns came to Edinburgh: by Dr. B. he was received with the most flattering kindness, and was earnestly introduced to every person of taste and generosity among the good old man's friends. It was little Blacklock had in his power to do for a brother poet—but that little he did with a fond alacrity, and with a modest grace. E.

life of an honest man, has by no means lived in vain!

With every wish for your welfare, and future success,

I am, my dear sir,
Sincerely yours.

No. XXXV.

To WILLIAM CREECH, Esq.

Ellisland, May 30, 1789.

Sir,

I had intended to have troubled you with a long letter, but at present the delightful sensations of an omnipotent toothach so engross all my inner man, as to put it out of my power even to write nonsense.—However, as in duty bound, I approach my bookseller with an offering in my hand—a few poetic clinches and a song.—To expect any other offering from the *rhyming tribe*, would be to know them much less than you do. I do not pretend that there is much merit in these *morceaux*, but I have two reasons for sending them: *primo*, they are mostly ill-natured, so are in unison with my present feelings, while fifty troops of infernal spirits are driving post from ear to ear along my jaw-bones; and *secondly*, they are so short, that you cannot leave off in the middle, and so hurt my pride in the idea that you found any work of mine too heavy to get through.

I have a request to beg of you, and I not only beg of you, but conjure you—by all your wishes and by all your hopes, that the muse will spare the satiric wink in the moment of your foibles; that she will warble the song of rapture round your hymeneal couch; and that she will shed on your turf the honest tear of elegiac gratitude! grant my request as speedily as possible.—Send me by the very first fly or coach for this place, three copies of the last edition of my poems; which place to my account.

Now, may the good things of prose, and the good things of verse, come among thy hands until they be filled with the *good things of this life!* prayeth

ROBERT BURNS.

No. XXXVI.

To Mr. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Ellisland, June 8, 1789.

My dear friend,

I am perfectly ashamed of myself when I look at the date of your last. It is not that I forget the friend of my heart and the companion of my peregrinations; but I have been condemned to drudgery beyond sufferance, though not, thank God, beyond redemption. I have had a collection of poems by a lady put into my hands to prepare them for the press; which horrid task, with sowing my corn with my own hand, a parcel of masons, wrights, plaisterers, &c. to attend to, roaming on business through Ayrshire—all this was against me, and the very first dreadful article was of itself too much for me.

13th. I have not had a moment to spare from incessant toil since the 8th. Life, my dear sir, is a serious matter. You know by experience that a man's individual self is a good deal, but believe me, a wife and family of children, whenever you have the honour to be a husband and a father, will show you that your present most anxious hours of solicitude are spent on trifles. The welfare of those who are very dear to us, whose only support, hope, and stay we are—this, to a generous mind, is another sort of more important object of care than any concerns whatever which centre merely in the individual. On the other hand, let no young, unmarried, rakehelly dog among you, make a song of his pretended liberty and freedom from care. If the relations we stand in to king, country, kindred, and friends, be any thing but the visionary fancies of dreaming metaphysicians; if religion, virtue, magnanimity, generosity, humanity, and justice be aught but empty sounds; then the man who may be said to love only others, for the beloved, honourable female whose tender faithful embrace endears life, and for the helpless little innocents who are to be the men and women, the worshippers of his God, the subjects of his king, and the support, nay, the very vital existence of his *country*, in the ensuing age;—compare such a man with any fellow whatever, who, whether he bustle and push in business among labourers, clerks, statesmen; or whether he roar and rant, and drink and sing in taverns—a fellow over whose grave no one will breathe a single heigh-ho, except from the cobweb-tie of what is called good fellowship—who has no view nor aim but what terminates in himself—if there be any grovelling earth-born wretch of our species, a renegado to common sense, who would fain believe that the noble creature, man, is no better than a sort of fungus, generated out of nothing, nobody knows how, and soon dissipating in nothing, nobody knows where; such a stupid beast, such a crawling reptile might balance the foregoing unexaggerated comparison, but no one else would have the patience.

Forgive me, my dear sir, for this long silence. *To make you amends*, I shall send you soon, and, more encouraging still, without any postage, one or two rhymes of my later manufacture.

No. XXXVII.

To Capt. RIDDEL, Carse.

Ellisland, Oct. 16, 1789.

Sir,

Big with the idea of this important day* at Friars Carse, I have watched the elements and skies in the full persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific portent.—Yesternight, until a very late hour, did I wait with anxious horror, for the ap-

* The day on which "the whistle" was contended for.

pearance of some comet firing half the sky; or aerial armies of sanguinary Scandinavians, darting athwart the sparkled heavens, rapid as the ragged lightning, and horrid as those convulsions of nature that bury nations.

The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly; they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes, and the mighty claret-shed of the day.—For me, as Thomson in his Winter says of the storm—I shall "Hear astonished, and astonished sing"

The whistle and the man; I sing
The man that won the whistle, &c.

"Here we are met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys I trow are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold coward loun is he:
Wha *last** beside his chair shall fa'
He is the king amang us three."

To leave the heights of Parnassus and come to the humble vale of prose.—I have some misgivings that I take too much upon me, when I request you to get your guest, sir Robert Lowrie, to frank the two inclosed covers for me, the one of them, to sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, bart. at Auchenskeith, Kilmarnock,—the other, to Mr. Allan Masterton, writing-master, Edinburgh. The first has a kindred claim on sir Robert, as being a brother baronet, and likewise a keen Foxite; the other is one of the worthiest men in the world, and a man of real genius; so, allow me to say, he has a fraternal claim on you. I want them franked for to-morrow, as I cannot get them for the post to-night.—I shall send a servant again for them in the evening. Wishing that your head may be crowned with laurels to-night, and free from aches to-morrow,

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your deeply indebted humble servant.

No. XXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Sir,

I wish from my inmost soul it were in my power to give you a more substantial gratification and return for all your goodness to the poet, than transcribing a few of his idle rhymes.—However, "an old song," though to a proverb an instance of insignificance, is generally the only coin a poet has to pay with.

If my poems which I have transcribed, and mean still to transcribe into your book, were equal to the grateful respect and high esteem I bear for the gentleman to whom I present them, they would be the finest poems in the language.—As they are, they will at least be a testimony with what sincerity I have the honour to be,

Sir,
Your devoted humble servant.

No. XXXIX.

To Mr. ROBERT AINSLIE.

Ellisland, Nov. 1, 1789.

My dear friend,

I had written you long ere now, could I have guessed where to find you, for I am sure you have more good sense than to waste the precious days of vacation time in the dirt of business and Edinburgh.—Wherever you are, God bless you, and lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from evil!

I do not know if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. In this I was extremely lucky. Without ever having been an expectant, as they call their journeymen excisemen, I was directly planted down to all intents and purposes an officer of excise; there to flourish and bring forth fruits—worthy of repentance.

I know not how the word exciseman, or still more opprobrious gauger, will sound in your ears. I too have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this subject; but a wife and children are things which have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow, is no bad settlement for a *poet*. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting serjeant give to a numerous, if not a respectable audience, in the streets of Kilmarnock.—"Gentlemen, for your further and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the crown, and consequently with us an honest fellow has the surest chance for preferment."

You need not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business; but I am tired with, and disgusted at the language of complaint against the evils of life. Human existence, in the most favourable situations, does not abound with pleasures, and has its inconveniences and ills; capricious, foolish man mistakes these inconveniences and ills as if they were the peculiar property of his particular situation; and hence that eternal fickleness, that love of change, which has ruined, and daily does ruin many a fine fellow, as well as many a blockhead; and is almost, without exception, a constant source of disappointment and misery.

I long to hear from you how you go on—not so much in business as in life. Are you pretty well satisfied with your own exertions, and tolerably at ease in your internal reflections? 'Tis much to be a great character as a lawyer, but beyond com-

* In former editions of these verses, the word *first* has been printed in this place instead of the word *last*. E.

parison more to be a great character as a man. That you may be both the one and the other is the earnest wish, and that you *will* be both, is the firm persuasion of,

My dear sir, &c.

No. XL.

To Mr. PETER HILL, Bookseller, Edinburgh.

Ellisland, Feb. 2, 1790.

No! I will not say one word about apologies or excuses for not writing—I am a poor, rascally gauger, condemned to gallop at least 200 miles every week to inspect dirty ponds and yeasty barrels, and where can I find time to write to, or importance to interest any body? The upbraidings of my conscience, nay, the upbraidings of my wife, have persecuted me on your account these two or three months past.—I wish to God I was a great man, that my correspondence might throw light upon you, to let the world see what you really are; and then I would make your fortune, without putting my hand in my pocket for you, which, like all other great men, I suppose I would avoid as much as possible. What are you doing, and how are you doing? Have you lately seen any of my few friends? What is become of the *borough reform*, or how is the fate of my poor namesake mademoiselle Burns decided? O man! but for thee and thy selfish appetites, and dishonest artifices, that beauteous form, and that once innocent and still ingenuous mind might have shone conspicuous and lovely in the faithful wife, and the affectionate mother; and shall the unfortunate sacrifice to thy pleasures have no claim on thy humanity?

I saw lately in a Review, some extracts from a new poem, called The Village Curate; send it me. I want likewise a cheap copy of The World. Mr. Armstrong, the young poet, who does me the honour to mention me so kindly in his works, please give him my best thanks for the copy of his book—I shall write him, my first leisure hour. I like his poetry much, but I think his style in prose quite astonishing.

* * * *

Your book came safe, and I am going to trouble you with farther commissions. I call it troubling you—because I want only *books*; the cheapest way, the best; so you may have to hunt for them in the evening auctions. I want Smollett's Works, for the sake of his incomparable humour. I have already Roderick Random, and Humphrey Clinker.—Peregrine Pickle, Launcelot Greaves, and Ferdinand, Count Fathom, I still want; but as I said, the veriest ordinary copies will serve me. I am nice only in the appearance of my poets. I forget the price of Cowper's Poems, but, I believe, I must have them. I saw the other day, proposals for a publication, entitled, "Banks's new and complete Christian's Family Bible," printed for C. Cooke, Paternoster-row, London.—He promises, at least, to give in the work, I think it is three hundred and odd engravings, to which he has put the names of the first artists in London*.—You will know the character of the performance, as some numbers of it are published; and if it is really what it pretends to be, set me down as a subscriber, and send me the published numbers.

Let me hear from you, your first leisure minute, and trust me, you shall in future have no reason to complain of my silence. The dazzling perplexity of novelty will dissipate and leave me to pursue my course in the quiet path of methodical routine.

No. XLI.

To Mr. W. NICOL.

Ellisland, Feb. 9, 1790.

My dear sir,

That d-mned mare of yours is dead. I would freely have given her price to have saved her: she has vexed me beyond description. Indebted as I was to your goodness beyond what I can ever repay, I eagerly grasped at your offer to have the mare with me. That I might at least show my readiness in wishing to be grateful, I took every care of her in my power. She was never crossed for riding above half a score of times by me or in my keeping. I drew her in the plough, one of three, for one poor week. I refused fifty-five shillings for her, which was the highest bode I could squeeze for her. I fed her up and had her in fine order for Dumfries fair; when four or five days before the fair, she was seized with an unaccountable disorder in the sinews, or somewhere in the bones of the neck; with a weakness or total want of power in her fillets, and in short, the whole vertebræ of her spine seemed to be diseased or unhinged, and in eight and forty hours, in spite of the two best farriers in the country, she died and be d-mned to her! The farriers said that she had

* Perhaps no set of men more effectually avail themselves of the easy credulity of the public, than a certain description of Paternoster-row booksellers. Three hundred and odd engravings!—and by the *first artists* in London, too! No wonder that Burns was dazzled by the splendour of the promise. It is no unusual thing for this class of impostors to *illustrate* the *Holy Scriptures* by plates originally engraved for the *History of England*, and I have actually seen subjects designed by our celebrated artist Stothard, from *Clarissa Harlowe* and the *Novelist's Magazine*, converted, with incredible dexterity, by these bookselling-Breslaws, into *scriptural embellishments!* One of these venders of 'Family Bibles' lately called on me, to consult me professionally about a folio engraving he brought with him.—It represented *Mons. Buffon*, seated, contemplating various groups of animals that surrounded him. He merely wished, he said to be informed, whether by *unclothing* the naturalist, and giving him a rather more *resolute* look, the plate could not, at a trifling expense, be made to pass for "*Daniel in the lion's den.*" E.

been quite strained in the fillets beyond cure before you had bought her; and that the poor devil, though she might keep a little flesh, had been jaded and quite worn out with fatigue and oppression. While she was with me, she was under my own eye, and I assure you, my much valued friend, every thing was done for her that could be done; and the accident has vexed me to the heart. In fact, I could not pluck up spirits to write you, on account of the unfortunate business.

There is little new in this country. Our theatrical company, of which you must have heard, leave us in a week. Their merit and character are indeed very great, both on the stage and in private life; not a worthless creature among them; and their encouragement has been accordingly. Their usual run is from eighteen to twenty-five pounds a night; seldom less than the one, and the house will hold no more than the other. There have been repeated instances of sending away six, and eight, and ten pounds in a night for want of room. A new theatre is to be built by subscription; the first stone is to be laid on Friday first to come*. Three hundred guineas have been raised by thirty subscribers, and thirty more might have been got if wanted. The manager, Mr. Sutherland, was introduced to me by a friend from Ayr; and a worthier or eleverer fellow I have rarely met with. Some of our clergy have slipt in by stealth now and then; but they have got up a farce of their own. You must have heard how the Rev. Mr. Lawson of Kirkmahoe, seconded by the Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, and the rest of that faction, have accused, in formal process, the unfortunate and Rev. Mr. Heron of Kirkgunzeon, that in ordaining Mr. Nelson to the cure of souls in Kirkbean, he, the said Heron, feloniously and treasonably bound the said Nelson to the confession of faith, *so far as it was agreeable to reason and the word of God!*

Mrs. B. begs to be remembered most gratefully to you. Little Bobby and Frank are charmingly well and healthy. I am jaded to death with fatigue. For these two or three months, on an average, I have not ridden less than two hundred miles per week. I have done little in the poetic way. I have given Mr. Sutherland two prologues; one of which was delivered last week. I have likewise strung four or five barbarous stanzas to the tune of Chevy Chase, by way of elegy on your poor unfortunate mare, beginning (the name she got here was Peg Nicholson)

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,
As ever trode on airn;
But now she's floating down the Nith,
And past the mouth o' Cairn.

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,
And rode thro' thick and thin;
But now she's floating down the Nith,
And wanting even the skin.

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,
And anee she bore a priest;
But now she's floating down the Nith,
For Solway fish a feast.

Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,
And the priest he rode her sair:
And much oppressed and bruised she was;
—As priest-rid cattle are, &c. &c.

My best compliments to Mrs Nicol, and little Neddy, and all the family. I hope Ned is a good scholar, and will come out to gather nuts and apples with me next harvest.

* *On Friday first to come*—a Scotticism.

No. XLII.

To Mr. MURDOCH, Teacher of French, London.

Ellisland, July 16, 1790.

My dear sir,

I received a letter from you a long time ago, but unfortunately as it was in the time of my peregrinations and journeyings through Scotland, I mislaid or lost it, and by consequence your direction along with it. Luckily my good star brought me acquainted with Mr. Kennedy, who, I understand, is an acquaintance of yours: and by his means and mediation I hope to replace that link which my unfortunate negligence had so unluckily broke in the chain of our correspondence. I was the more vexed at the vile accident, as my brother William, a journeyman saddler, has been for some time in London; and wished above all things for your direction, that he might have paid his respects to his *father's friend.*

His last address he sent me was, "Wm. Burns, at Mr. Barber's, saddler, No. 181, Strand." I write him by Mr. Kennedy, but I neglected to ask him for your address; so, if you find a spare half minute, please let my brother know by a card where and when he will find you, and the poor fellow will joyfully wait on you, as one of the few surviving friends of the man whose name, and Christian name too, he has the honour to bear.

The next letter I write you shall be a long one. I have much to tell you of "hair-breadth 'scapes in th' imminent deadly breach," with all the eventful history of a life, the early years of which owed so much to your kind tutorage; but this at an hour of leisure. My kindest compliments to Mrs. Murdoch and family.

I am ever, my dear sir,
Your obliged friend*.

* This letter was communicated to the editor by a gentleman to whose liberal advice and information he is much indebted, Mr. John Murdoch, the tutor of the poet; accompanied by the following interesting note.

London, Hart-street Bloomsbury,
20th Dec. 1807.

Dear sir,

The following letter, which I lately found among my papers, I copy for your perusal, partly because it is Burns's, partly because it makes honourable mention of my rational Christian friend;

No. XLIII.

To CRAUFORD TAIT, Esq. Edinburgh.

Ellisland, Oct. 15, 1790.

Dear sir,

Allow me to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer, Mr. Wm. Duncan, a friend of mine, whom I have long known and long loved. His father, whose only son he is, has a decent little property in Ayrshire, and has bred the young man to the law, in which department he comes up an adventurer to your good town. I shall give you my friend's character in two words: as to his head, he has talents enough, and more than enough for common life; as to his heart, when nature had kneaded the kindly clay that composes it, she said, "I can no more."

You, my good sir, were born under kinder stars; but your fraternal sympathy, I well know, can enter into the feelings of the young man, who goes into life with the laudable ambition to *do* something, and to *be* something among his fellow creatures; but whom the consciousness of friendless obscurity presses to the earth, and wounds to the soul!

Even the fairest of his virtues are against him. That independent spirit, and that ingenuous modesty, qualities inseparable from a noble mind, are, with the million, circumstances not a little disqualifying. What pleasure is in the power of the fortunate and the happy, by their notice and patronage, to brighten the countenance and glad the heart of such depressed youth! I am not so angry with mankind for their deaf economy of the purse:—the goods of this world cannot be divided, without being lessened—but why be a niggard of that which bestows bliss on a fellow creature, yet takes nothing from our own means of enjoyment? We wrap ourselves up in the cloaks of our own better fortune and turn away our eyes, lest the wants and woes of our brother mortals should disturb the selfish apathy of our souls!

I am the worst hand in the world at asking a favour. That indirect address, that insinuating implication, which, without any positive request, plainly expresses your wish, is a talent not to be acquired at a plough-tail. Tell me then, for you can, in what periphrasis of language, in what circumvolution of phrase, I shall envelope yet not conceal this plain story.—"My dear Mr. Tait, my friend Mr. Duncan, whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you, is a young lad of your own profession, and a gentleman of much modesty and great worth. Perhaps it may be in your power to assist him in the, to him, important consideration of getting a place; but at all events, your notice and acquaintance will be a very great acquisition to him; and I dare pledge myself that he will never disgrace your favour."

You may possibly be surprised, sir, at such a letter from me; 'tis, I own, in the usual way of calculating these matters, more than our acquaintance entitles me to; but my answer is short: Of all the men at your time of life, whom I knew in Edinburgh, you are the most accessible on the side on which I have assailed you. You are very much altered indeed from what you were when I knew you, if generosity point the path you will not tread, or humanity call to you in vain.

As to myself, a being to whose interest I believe you are still a well-wisher; I am here, breathing at all times, thinking sometimes, and rhyming now and then. Every situation has its share of the cares and pains of life, and my situation I am persuaded has a full ordinary allowance of its pleasures and enjoyments.

My best compliments to your father and miss Tait. If you have an opportunity, please remember me in the solemn league and covenant of friendship to Mrs. Lewis Hay. I am a wretch for not writing to her; but I am so hackneyed with self-accusation in that way, that my conscience lies in my bosom with scarce the sensibility of an oyster in its shell. Where is lady M'Kenzie? Wherever she is, God bless her! I likewise beg leave to trouble you with compliments to Mr. Wm. Hamilton; Mrs. Hamilton and family; and Mrs.

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his father; and likewise because it is rather flattering to myself. I glory in no one thing so much as an intimacy with good men:—the friendship of others reflects no honour. When I recollect the pleasure (and I hope benefit) I received from the conversation of *William Burns*, especially when, on the Lord's day, we walked together for about two miles, to the house of prayer, there publicly to adore and praise the Giver of all good, I entertain an ardent hope, that together we shall "renew the glorious theme in distant worlds," with powers more adequate to the mighty subject, *the exuberant beneficence of the great Creator*. But to the letter:—[*Here follows the letter relative to young Wm. Burns.*]

I promised myself a deal of happiness in the conversation of my dear young friend; but my promises of this nature generally prove fallacious. Two visits were the utmost that I received. At one of them, however, he repeated a lesson which I had given him about twenty years before, when he was a mere child, concerning the pity and tenderness due to animals. To that lesson, (which it seems was brought to the level of his capacity,) he declared himself indebted for almost all the philanthropy he possessed.

Let not parents and teachers imagine that it is needless to talk seriously to children. They are sooner fit to be reasoned with than is generally thought. Strong and indelible impressions are to be made before the mind be agitated and ruffled by the numerous train of distracting cares and unruly passions, whereby it is frequently rendered almost unsusceptible of the principles and precepts of rational religion and sound morality.

But I find myself digressing again. Poor William! then in the bloom and vigour of youth, caught a putrid fever, and, in a few days, as real chief mourner, I followed his remains to the land of forgetfulness.

JOHN MURDOCH.

Chalmers, when you are in that country. Should you meet with Mrs. Nimmo, please remember me kindly to her.

No. XLIV.

To ————,

Dear sir,

Whether in the way of my trade, I can be of any service to the reverend doctor*, is I fear very doubtful. Ajax's shield consisted, I think, of seven bull hides and a plate of brass, which altogether set Hector's utmost force at defiance. Alas! I am not a Hector, and the worthy doctor's foes are as securely armed as Ajax was. Ignorance, superstition, bigotry, stupidity, malevolence, self-conceit, envy—all strongly bound in a massy frame of brazen impudence. Good God, sir! to such a shield humour is the peek of a sparrow, and satire the pop-gun of a school-boy. Creation-disgracing *scelerats* such as they, God only can mend, and the Devil only can punish. In the comprehending way of Caligula, I wish they had all but one neck. I feel impotent as a child to the ardour of my wishes! O for a withering curse to blast the germins of their wicked machinations. O for a poisonous tornado, winged from the torrid zone of Tartarus, to sweep the spreading crop of their villainous contrivances to the lowest hell!

No. XLV.

To Mr. ALEXANDER DALZIEL†, Factor, Findlayston.

Ellisland, March 19, 1791.

My dear sir,

I have taken the liberty to frank this letter to you, as it encloses an idle poem of mine, which I send you; and God knows you may perhaps pay dear enough for it if you read it through. Not that this is my own opinion; but an author, by the time he has composed and corrected his work, has quite poured away all his powers of critical discrimination.

I can easily guess from my own heart, what you have felt on a late most melancholy event. God knows what I have suffered, at the loss of my best friend, my first, my dearest patron and benefactor; the man to whom I owe all that I am and have! I am gone into mourning for him, and with more sincerity of grief than I fear some will, who, by nature's ties, ought to feel on the occasion.

I will be exceedingly obliged to you indeed, to let me know the news of the noble family, how the poor mother and the two sisters support their loss. I had a packet of poetic bagatelles ready to send to lady Betty, when I saw the fatal tidings in the newspaper. I see by the same channel that the honoured *remains* of my noble patron, are designed to be brought to the family burial-place. Dare I trouble you to let me know privately before the day of interment, that I may cross the country, and steal among the crowd, to pay a tear to the last sight of my ever-revered benefactor? It will oblige me beyond expression.

No. XLVI.

Mr. THOMAS SLOAN, care of Wm. Kennedy, Esq. Manchester.

Ellisland, Sept. 1, 1791.

My dear Sloan,

Suspence is worse than disappointment; for that reason I hurry to tell you that I just now learn that Mr. Ballantine does not chuse to interfere more in the business. I am truly sorry for it, but cannot help it.

You blame me for not writing you sooner; but you will please to recollect that you omitted one little necessary piece of information;—your address.

However, you know equally well my hurried life indolent temper, and strength of attachment. It must be a longer period than the longest life "in the world's hale and undegenerate days," that will make me forget so dear a friend as Mr. Sloan. I am prodigal enough at times, but I will not part with such a treasure as that.

I can easily enter into the *embarras* of your present situation. You know my favourite quotation from Young—

——— "On reason build *resolve!*
That column of true majesty in man."—

And that other favourite one from Thomson's Alfred—

"What proves the hero truly *great*,
Is, never, never to despair."

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* Dr. M'Gill of Ayr. The poet gives the best illustration of this letter in one addressed to Mr. Graham. *See General Correspondence, No.* 86.

† This gentleman, the factor, or steward, of Burns's noble friend, lord Glencairn, with a view to encourage a second edition of the poems, laid the volume before his lordship, with such an account of the rustic bard's situation and prospects as, from his slender acquaintance with him, he could furnish. The result, as communicated to Burns by Dalziel, is highly creditable to the character of lord Glencairn. After reading the book, his lordship declared that its merits greatly exceeded his expectation, and he took it with him as a *literary curiosity* to Edinburgh. He repeated his wishes to be of service to Burns, and desired Mr. Dalziel to inform him, that in patronizing the book, ushering it with effect into the world, or treating with the booksellers, he would most willingly give every aid in his power; adding his request, that Burns would take the earliest opportunity of letting him know in what way or manner he could best further his interests. He also expressed a wish to see some of the unpublished manuscripts, with a view to establish his character with the world. E.

Or, shall I quote you an author of your acquaintance?

"——Whether *doing*, *suffering*, or *forbearing*,
You may do miracles by—*persevering*."

I have nothing new to tell you. The few friends we have are going on in the old way. I sold my crop on this day se'nnight, and sold it very well. A guinea an acre, on an average, above value. But such a scene of drunkenness was hardly ever seen in this country. After the roup was over, about thirty people engaged in a battle, every man for his own hand, and fought it out for three hours. Nor was the scene much better in the house. No fighting, indeed, but folks lying drunk on the floor and decanting, until both my dogs got so drunk by attending them, that they could not stand. You will easily guess how I enjoyed the scene; as I was no farther over than you used to see me.

Mrs. B. and family have been in Ayrshire these many weeks.

Farewel! and God bless you, my dear friend!

No. XLVII.

To FRANCIS GROSE, Esq. F. A. S.

1792.

Sir,

I believe among all our Scots literati you have not met with professor Dugald Stewart, who fills the moral philosophy chair in the university of Edinburgh. To say that he is a man of the first parts, and what is more, a man of the first worth, to a gentleman of your general acquaintance, and who so much enjoys the luxury of unincumbered freedom and undisturbed privacy, is not perhaps recommendation enough:—but when I inform you that Mr. Stewart's principal characteristic is your favourite feature; *that* sterling independence of mind, which, though every man's right, so few men have the courage to claim, and fewer still the magnanimity to support:—when I tell you, that unseduced by splendour, and undisgusted by wretchedness, he appreciates the merits of the various actors in the great drama of life, merely as they perform their parts—in short, he is a man after your own heart, and I comply with his earnest request in letting you know that he wishes above all things to meet with you. His house, Catrine, is within less than a mile of Sorn Castle, which you proposed visiting; or if you could transmit him the enclosed, he would with the greatest pleasure, meet you any where in the neighbourhood. I write to Ayrshire to inform Mr. Stewart that I have acquitted myself of my promise. Should your time and spirits permit your meeting with Mr. Stewart, 'tis well; if not, I hope you will forgive this liberty, and I have at least an opportunity of assuring you with what truth and respect,

I am, sir,
Your great admirer,
And very humble servant.

No. XLVIII.

TO THE SAME.

Among the many witch-stories I have heard relating to Aloway Kirk, I distinctly remember only two or three.

Upon a stormy night, amid whistling squalls of wind, and bitter blasts of hail; in short, on such a night as the devil would chuse to take the air in; a farmer, or farmer's servant, was plodding and plashing homeward with his plough-irons on his shoulder, having been getting some repairs on them at a neighbouring smithy. His way lay by the kirk of Aloway, and being rather on the anxious look-out in approaching a place so well known to be a favourite haunt of the devil and the devil's friends and emissaries, he was struck aghast by discovering through the horrors of the storm and stormy night, a light, which, on his nearer approach, plainly showed itself to proceed from the haunted edifice. Whether he had been fortified from above on his devout supplication, as is customary with people when they suspect the immediate presence of Satan; or whether, according to another custom, he had got courageously drunk at the smithy, I will not pretend to determine; but so it was that he ventured to go up to, nay into the very kirk. As good luck would have it, his temerity came off unpunished.

The members of the infernal junto were all out on some midnight business or other, and he saw nothing but a kind of kettle or caldron, depending from the roof, over the fire, simmering some heads of unchristened children, limbs of executed malefactors, &c. for the business of the night.—It was, in for a penny, in for a pound, with the honest ploughman: so without ceremony he unhooked the caldron from off the fire, and pouring out the damnable ingredients, inverted it on his head, and carried it fairly home, where it remained long in the family, a living evidence of the truth of the story.

Another story, which I can prove to be equally authentic, was as follows:

On a market day, in the town of Ayr, a farmer from Carrick, and consequently whose way lay by the very gate of Aloway kirk-yard, in order to cross the river Doon at the old bridge, which is about two or three hundred yards further on than the said gate, had been detained by his business, 'till by the time he reached Aloway it was the wizard hour, between night and morning.

Though he was terrified with a blaze streaming from the kirk, yet, as it is a well-known fact that, to turn back on these occasions, is running by far the greatest risk of mischief, he prudently advanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirk-yard, he was surprised and entertained, through the ribs and arches of an old gothic window, which still faces the highway, to see a dance of witches merrily footing it round their old sooty blackguard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bag-pipe. The farmer, stopping his horse to observe them a

little, could plainly descry the faces of many old women of his acquaintance and neighbourhood. How the gentleman was dressed, tradition does not say; but the ladies were all in their smocks: and one of them happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purpose of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled, that he involuntarily burst out with a loud laugh, "Weel luppen, Maggy wi' the short sark!" and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse to the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally known fact, that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running stream. Lucky it was for the poor farmer that the river Doon was so near, for notwithstanding the speed of his horse, which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge, and consequently the middle of the stream, the pursuing vengeful hags were so close at his heels, that one of them actually sprung to seize him; but it was too late, nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way at her infernal grip, as if blasted by a stroke of lightning; but the farmer was beyond her reach. However, the unsightly, tailless condition of the vigorous steed was to the last hour of the noble creature's life, an awful warning to the Carrick farmers, not to stay too late in Ayr markets.

The last relation I shall give, though equally true, is not so well identified as the two former, with regard to the scene: but as the best authorities give it for Alloway, I shall relate it.

On a summer's evening, about the time that nature puts on her sables to mourn the expiry of the cheerful day, a shepherd boy belonging to a farmer in the immediate neighbourhood of Alloway kirk, had just folded his charge, and was returning home. As he passed the kirk, in the adjoining field, he fell in with a crew of men and women, who were busy pulling stems of the plant of ragwort. He observed that as each person pulled a ragwort, he or she got astride of it, and called out, "up horsie!" on which the ragwort flew off, like Pegasus, through the air with its rider. The foolish boy likewise pulled his ragwort and cried with the rest, "up horsie!" and, strange to tell, away he flew with the company. The first stage at which the cavalcade stopt, was a merchant's wine-cellar in Bordeaux, where, without saying by your leave, they quaffed away at the best the cellar could afford, until the morning, foe to the imps and works of darkness, threatened to throw light on the matter, and frightened them from their carousals.

The poor shepherd lad, being equally a stranger to the scene and the liquor, heedlessly got himself drunk; and when the rest took horse, he fell asleep, and was found so next day by some of the people belonging to the merchant. Somebody that understood Scotch, asking him what he was, he said he was such-a-one's herd in Alloway, and by some means or other getting home again, he lived long to tell the world the wondrous tale.

I am, &c. &c.*

* This letter was copied from the *Censura Literaria*, 1786. It was communicated to the editor of that work by Mr. Gilchrist of Stamford, with the following remark.

"In a collection of miscellaneous papers of the antiquary Grose, which I purchased a few years since, I found the following letter written to him by Burns, when the former was collecting the antiquities of Scotland; when I premise it was on the second tradition that he afterwards formed the inimitable tale of "Tam O'Shanter," I cannot doubt of its being read with great interest. It were "burning day-light" to point out to a reader, (and who is not a reader of Burns?) the thoughts he afterwards transplanted into the rhythmical narrative."

O. G.

No. XLIX.

To R. GRAHAM, Esq. Fintry.

December, 1792.

Sir,

I have been surprised, confounded, and distracted, by Mr. Mitchel, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your board to enquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government. Sir, you are a husband—and a father.—You know what you would feel, to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones, turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas, sir! must I think that such, soon, will be my lot! and from the d—mned, dark insinuations of hellish groundless envy too! I believe, sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head; and I say, that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British constitution, on revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached! You, sir, have been much and generously my friend.—Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation, and how gratefully I have thanked you.—Fortune, sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent; has given you patronage, and me dependance.—I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin; for at the worst, "Death's thousand doors stand open;" but, good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage, and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due: to these, sir, permit me to appeal; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved.

No. L.

To Mr. S. CLARKE, Edinburgh.

July, 16, 1792.

Mr. Burns begs leave to present his most respectful compliments to Mr. Clarke.—Mr. B. some time ago did himself the honour of writing Mr. C. respecting coming out to the country, to give a little musical instruction in a highly respectable family, where Mr. C. may have his own terms, and may be as happy as indolence, the Devil, and the gout will permit him. Mr. B. knows well how Mr. C. is engaged with another family; but cannot Mr. C. find two or three weeks to spare to each of them? Mr. B. is deeply impressed with, and awfully conscious of, the high importance of Mr. C.'s time, whether in the winged moments of symphonious exhibition, at the keys of harmony, while listening seraphs cease their own less delightful strains;—or in the drowsy hours of slumb'rous repose, in the arms of his dearly-beloved elbow-chair, where the frowsy, but potent power of indolence, circumfuses her vapours round, and sheds her dews on, the head of her darling son.—But half a line conveying half a meaning from Mr. C. would make Mr. B. the very happiest of mortals.

No. LI.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Dec. 31, 1792.

Dear madam,

A hurry of business, thrown in heaps by my absence, has until now prevented my returning my grateful acknowledgments to the good family of Dunlop, and you in particular, for that hospitable kindness which rendered the four days I spent under that genial roof, four of the pleasantest I ever enjoyed.—Alas, my dearest friend! how few and fleeting are those things we call pleasures! On my road to Ayrshire, I spent a night with a friend whom I much valued; a man whose days promised to be many; and on Saturday last we laid him in the dust!

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Jan. 2, 1793.

I have just received yours of the 30th, and feel much for your situation. However, I heartily rejoice in your prospect of recovery from that vile jaundice. As to myself I am better, though not quite free of my complaint. You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned: it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this country, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over*.

Mr. Corbet can be of little service to me at present; at least I should be shy of applying. I cannot possibly be settled as a supervisor, for several years. I must wait the rotation of the list, and there are twenty names before mine.—I might indeed get a job of officiating, where a settled supervisor was ill, or aged; but that hauls me from my family, as I could not remove them on such an uncertainty. Besides, some envious, malicious devil has raised a little demur on my political principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my supervisors. I have set henceforth a seal on my lips, as to these unlucky polities; but to you I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in every thing else, I shall show the undisguised emotions of my soul. War I deprecate: misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But * * * *

[*The remainder of this letter has been torn away by some barbarous hand.*]

No. LII.

To PATRICK MILLER, Esq. of Dalswinton.

April, 1793.

Sir,

My poems having just come out in another edition, will you do me the honour to accept of a

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* The following extract of a letter addressed by Mr. Bloomfield to the earl of Buchan, contains so interesting an exhibition of the modesty inherent in real worth, and so philosophical, and at the same time so poetical an estimate of the different characters and destinies of Burns and its author, that I should deem myself culpable were I to withhold it from the public view. E.

"The illustrious soul that has left amongst us the name of Burns, has often been lowered down to a comparison with me; but the comparison exists more in circumstances than in essentials. That man stood up with the stamp of superior intellect on his brow; a visible greatness: and great and patriotic subjects would only have called into action the powers of his mind, which lay inactive while he played calmly and exquisitely the pastoral pipe.

'The letters to which I have alluded in my preface to the 'Rural Tales,' were friendly warnings, pointed with immediate reference to the fate of that extraordinary man. 'Remember Burns,' has been the watch-word of my friends. I do remember Burns; but I *am not* Burns! neither have I his fire to fan or to quench; nor his passions to controul! Where then is my merit if I make a peaceful voyage on a smooth sea, and with no mutiny on board? To a lady (I have it from herself), who remonstrated with him on his danger from drink, and the pursuits of some of his associates, he replied, 'madam, they would not thank me for my company, if I did not drink with them:

copy? A mark of my gratitude to you, as a gentleman to whose goodness I have been much indebted; of my respect for you, as a patriot who, in a venal, sliding age, stands forth the champion of the liberties of my country; and of my veneration for you, as a man, whose benevolence of heart does honour to human nature.

There *was* a time, sir, when I was your dependant: this language *then* would have been like the vile incense of flattery—I could not have used it.—Now that connexion* is at an end, do me the honour to accept of this *honest* tribute of respect from, sir,

Your much indebted humble servant.

No. LIII.

To JOHN FRANCIS ERSKINE, Esq.† of Mar.

Dumfries, 13*th April*, 1793.

Sir,

Degenerate as human nature is said to be; and in many instances, worthless and unprincipled it is; still there are bright examples to the contrary; examples that even in the eyes of superior beings, must shed a lustre on the name of man.

Such an example have I now before me, when you, sir, came forward to patronize and befriend a distant obscure stranger, merely because poverty had made him helpless, and his British hardihood of mind had provoked the arbitrary wantonness of power. My much-esteemed friend, Mr. Riddel of Glenriddel, has just read me a paragraph of a letter he had from you. Accept, sir, of the silent throb of gratitude; for words would but mock the emotions of my soul.

You have been misinformed as to my final dismission from the excise; I am still in the service. Indeed, but for the exertions of a gentleman who must be known to you, Mr. Graham of Fintry, a gentleman who has ever been my warm and generous friend, I had, without so much as a hearing, or the slightest previous intimation, been turned adrift, with my helpless family, to all the horrors of want.—Had I had any other resource, probably I might have saved them the trouble of a dismission; but the little money I gained by my publication, is almost every guinea embarked, to save from ruin an only brother, who, though one of the worthiest, is by no means one of the most fortunate of men.

In my defence to their accusations, I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I abjured the idea. That a *constitution*, which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory:—that, in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of the people in power, I had forborne taking any active part, either personally, or as an author in the present business of *reform*. But that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power, and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious *constitution*; and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended.—Some such sentiments as these, I stated in a letter to my generous patron, Mr. Graham, which he laid before the board at large; where, it seems, my last remark gave great offence; and one of our supervisors general, a Mr. Corbet, was instructed to enquire on the spot, and to document me—" that my business was to act, *not to think*; and that whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be *silent* and *obedient*."

Mr. Corbet was likewise my steady friend; so between Mr. Graham and him, I have been partly forgiven; only I understand that all hopes of my getting officially forward, are blasted.

Now, sir, to the business in which I would more immediately interest you. The partiality of my *countrymen* has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the *poet* I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I trust will be found in the *man*. Reasons of no less weight than the support of a wife and family, have pointed out as the eligible, and, situated as I was, the only eligible line of life for me, my present occupation. Still my honest fame is my dearest concern; and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of those *degrading* epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name. I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some future hackney scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exulting in his hireling paragraphs—" *Burns*, notwithstanding the *fanfaronade* of independence to be found in his works, and after having been held forth to public view, and to public estimation, as a man of some genius, yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, he dwindled into a paltry exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the vilest of mankind."

In your illustrious hands, sir, permit me to lodge my disavowal and defiance of these slanderous falsehoods.—*Burns* was a poor man from birth,

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I *must* give them a slice of my constitution.' How much to be regretted that he did not give them thinner slices of his constitution, that it might have lasted longer!"

London, 1802.

* Alluding to the time when he held the farm of Ellisland, as tenant to Mr. M.

† This gentleman most obligingly favoured the editor with a perfect copy of the original letter, and allowed him to lay it before the public.—It is partly printed in *Dr. Currie's edition*.

It will be necessary to state, that in consequence of the poet's freedom of remark on public measures, maliciously misrepresented to the board of excise, he was represented as actually dismissed from his office.—This report induced Mr. Erskine to propose a subscription in his favour, which was refused by the poet with that elevation of sentiment that peculiarly characterized his mind, and which is so happily displayed in this letter. See letter No. 49, written by Burns, with even more than his accustomed pathos and eloquence, in further explanation. E.

and an exciseman by necessity: but—*I will* say it! the sterling of his honest worth, no poverty could debase, and his independent British mind, oppression might bend, but could not subdue. Have not I, to me, a more precious stake in my country's welfare, than the richest dukedom in it? I have a large family of children, and the prospect of many more. I have three sons, who, I see already, have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of *slaves*.—Can I look tamely on, and see any machination to wrest from them the birthright of my boys,—the little independent *Britons*, in whose veins runs my own blood?—No! I will not! should my heart's blood stream around my attempt to defend it!

Does any man tell me, that my full efforts can be of no service; and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concerns of a nation?

I can tell him, that it is on such individuals as I, that a nation has to rest, both for the hand of support, and the eye of intelligence. The uninformed *mob* may swell a nation's bulk; and the titled, tinsled, courtly throng, may be its feathered ornament; but the number of those who are elevated enough in life to reason and to reflect, yet low enough to keep clear of the venal contagion of a court;—these are a nation's strength.

I know not how to apologise for the impertinent length of this epistle; but one small request I must ask of you farther—When you have honoured this letter with a perusal, please to commit it to the flames. *Burns*, in whose behalf you have so generously interested yourself, I have here, in his native colours, drawn *as he is;* but should any of the people in whose hands is the very bread he eats, get the least knowledge of the picture, *it would ruin the poor* bard *for ever!*

My poems having just come out in another edition, I beg leave to present you with a copy, as a small mark of that high esteem and ardent gratitude, with which I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your deeply indebted,

And ever devoted humble servant.

No. LIV.

To Mr. ROBERT AINSLIE.

April 26, 1793.

I am d-mnably out of humour, my dear Ainslie, and that is the reason why I take up the pen to *you:* 'tis the nearest way *(probatum est)* to recover my spirits again.

I received your last, and was much entertained with it; but I will not at this time, nor at any other time, answer it.—Answer a letter! I never could answer a letter in my life!—I have written many a letter in return for letters I have received; but then—they were original matter—spurt-away! zig, here; zag, there; as if the devil, that, my grannie (an old woman indeed!) often told me, rode in will-o'-wisp, or, in her more classic phrase, *Spunkie*, were looking over my elbow.—Happy thought that idea has engendered in my head! *Spunkie*—thou shalt henceforth be my symbol, signature, and tutelary genius! Like thee, hap-step-and-lowp, here-awa-there-awa, higglety-pigglety, pell-mell, hither-and-yon, ram-stam, happy-go-lucky, up tails-a'-by-the-light-o'-the-moon; has been, is, and shall be, my progress through the mosses and moors of this vile, bleak, barren wilderness of a life of ours.

Come, then, my guardian spirit! like thee, may I skip away, amusing myself by, and at my own light: and if any opaque-souled lubber of mankind complain that my elfine, lambent, glimmerous wanderings have misled his stupid steps over precipices, or into bogs; let the thick-headed blunderbuss recollect that he is not *Spunkie:*—that

Spunkie's wanderings could not copied be;
Amid these perils none durst walk but he.—
* * * *

I have no doubt but scholarcraft may be caught as a Scotsman catches the itch,—by friction. How else can you account for it, that born blockheads, by mere dint of *handling* books, grow so wise that even they themselves are equally convinced of, and surprised at their own parts? I once carried this philosophy to that degree, that in a knot of country folks who had a library amongst them, and who, to the honour of their good sense, made me factotum in the business; one of our members, a little, wise-looking, squat, upright, jabbering body of a tayler, I advised him, instead of turning over the leaves, *to bind the book on his back.*—Johnie took the hint; and as our meetings were every fourth Saturday, and Pricklouse having a good Scots mile to walk in coming, and, of course, another in returning, Bodkin was sure to lay his hands on some heavy quarto, or ponderous folio, with, and under which, wrapt up in his grey plaid, he grew wise, as he grew weary, all the way home. He carried this so far, that an old musty Hebrew concordance which we had in a present from a neighbouring priest, by mere dint of applying it, as doctors do a blistering plaister, between his shoulders, Stitch, in a dozen pilgrimages, acquired as much rational theology, as the said priest had done by forty years perusal of the pages.

Tell me, and tell me truly, what you think of this theory.

Yours,

SPUNKIE.

No. LV.

To Miss K————.

Madam,

Permit me to present you with the enclosed song, as a small though grateful tribute for the honour of your acquaintance. I have, in these verses, attempted some faint sketches of your portrait in the unembellished simple manner of descriptive *truth.*—Flattery I leave to your *lovers*, whose exaggerating fancies may make them imagine you still nearer perfection than you really are.

Poets, madam, of all mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of *beauty*; as, if they are really *poets* of nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate than most of the world. In the cheerful bloom of *spring*, or the pensive mildness of *autumn*; the grandeur of *summer*, or the hoary majesty of *winter*; the poet feels a charm unknown to the rest of his species. Even the sight of a fine flower, or the company of a fine woman, (by far the finest part of God's works below) have sensations for the poetic heart, that the *herd* of man are strangers to.—On this last account, madam, I am, as in many other things, indebted to Mr. Hamilton's kindness in introducing me to you. Your lovers may view you with a wish, I look on you with pleasure; their hearts, in your presence, may glow with desire, mine rises with admiration.

That the arrows of misfortune, however they should, as incident to humanity, glance a slight wound, may never reach your *heart*—that the snares of villainy may never beset you in the road of life—that *innocence* may hand you by the path of *honour* to the dwelling of *peace*, is the sincere wish of him who has the honour to be, &c.

No. LVI.

To LADY GLENCAIRN.

My lady,

The honour you have done your poor poet, in writing him so very obliging a letter, and the pleasure the enclosed beautiful verses have given him, came very seasonably to his aid amid the cheerless gloom and sinking despondency of diseased nerves and December weather. As to forgetting the family of Glencairn, Heaven is my witness with what sincerity I could use those old verses, which please me more in their rude simplicity than the most elegant lines I ever saw:

If thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand.—

My tongue to my mouth's roof let cleave
If I do thee forget,
Jerusalem, and thee above
My chief joy do not set.—

When I am tempted to do any thing improper, I dare not, because I look on myself as accountable to your ladyship and family. Now and then, when I have the honour to be called to the tables of the great, if I happen to meet with any mortification from the stately stupidity of self-sufficient squires, or the luxuriant insolence of upstart nabobs, I get above the creatures by calling to remembrance that I am patronised by the noble house of Glencairn; and at gala-times, such as new-year's day, a christening, or the kirn-night, when my punch-bowl is brought from its dusty corner, and filled up in honour of the occasion, I begin with—*the countess of Glencairn!* My good woman, with the enthusiasm of a grateful heart, next cries, *my lord!* and so the toast goes on until I end with *lady Harriet's little angel!* whose epithalamium I have pledged myself to write.

When I received your ladyship's letter, I was just in the act of transcribing for you some verses I have lately composed; and meant to have sent them my first leisure hour, and acquainted you with my late change of life. I mentioned to my lord, my fears concerning my farm. Those fears were indeed too true; it is a bargain would have ruined me but for the lucky circumstance of my having an excise commission.

People may talk as they please, of the ignominy of the excise; fifty pounds a year will support my wife and children, and keep me independent of the world; and I would much rather have it said that my profession borrowed credit from me than that I borrowed credit from my profession. Another advantage I have in this business, is the knowledge it gives me of the various shades of human character consequently assisting me vastly in my poetic pursuits. I had the most ardent enthusiasm for the muses when nobody knew me but myself, and that ardour is by no means cooled now that my lord Glencairn's goodness has introduced me to all the world. Not that I am in haste for the press. I have no idea of publishing, else I certainly had consulted my noble generous patron; but after acting the part of an honest man, and supporting my family, my whole wishes and views are directed to poetic pursuits. I am aware, that though I were to give performances to the world superior to my former works, still, if they were of the same kind with those, the comparative reception they would meet with would mortify me. I have turned my thoughts on the drama. I do not mean the stately buskin of the tragic muse.

* * * *

Does not your ladyship think that an Edinburgh theatre would be more amused with affectation, folly, and whim of true Scottish growth, than manners which by far the greatest part of the audience can only know at second hand?

I have the honour to be
Your ladyship's ever devoted
And grateful humble servant.

No. LVII.

To THE EARL OF BUCHAN,

With a Copy of "Bruce's Address to his Troops at Bannockburn."

Dumfries, 12th Jan. 1794.

My lord,

Will your lordship allow me to present you with the inclosed little composition of mine, as a small tribute of gratitude for that acquaintance with which you have been pleased to honour me? Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with any thing in history which interests my feelings as a man, equal with the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel, but able usurper, leading on the finest army in Eu-

rope to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly-daring, and greatly-injured people; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation, devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country, or perish with her.

Liberty! thou art a prize truly, and indeed invaluable!—for never canst thou be too dearly bought!

I have the honour to be, &c.

No. LVIII.

To THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

My lord,

When you cast your eye on the name at the bottom of this letter, and on the title-page of the book I do myself the honour to send your lordship, a more pleasurable feeling than my vanity tells me, that it must be a name not entirely unknown to you. The generous patronage of your late illustrious brother found me in the lowest obscurity: he introduced my rustic muse to the partiality of my country; and to him I owe all. My sense of his goodness, and the anguish of my soul at losing my truly noble protector and friend, I have endeavoured to express in a poem to his memory, which I have now published. This edition is just from the press; and in my gratitude to the dead, and my respect for the living (fame belies you, my lord, if you possess not the same dignity of man, which was your noble brother's characteristic feature), I had destined a copy for the earl of Glencairn. I learnt just now that you are in town: allow me to present it you.

I know, my lord, such is the vile, venal contagion which pervades the world of letters, that professions of respect from an author, particularly from a poet, to a lord, are more than suspicious. I claim my by-past conduct, and my feelings at this moment, as exceptions to the too just conclusion. Exalted as are the honours of your lordship's name, and unnoted as is the obscurity of mine; with the uprightness of an honest man, I come before your lordship, with an offering, however humble, 'tis all I have to give, of my grateful respect; and to beg of you, my lord,—'tis all I have to ask of you, that you will do me the honour to accept of it.

I have the honour to be, &c.*

No. LIX.

To Dr. ANDERSON.

Sir,

I am much indebted to my worthy friend Dr. Blacklock for introducing me to a gentleman of Dr. Anderson's celebrity; but when you do me the honour to ask my assistance in your purposed publication, alas, sir! you might as well think to cheapen a little honesty at the sign of an advocate's wig, or humility under the Geneva band. I am a miserable hurried devil, worn to the marrow in the friction of holding the noses of the poor publicans to the grindstone of excise; and like Milton's Satan, for private reasons, am forced

"*To do what yet tho' damn'd I would abhor;*"

and except a couplet or two of honest execration

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No. LX.

To Mrs. DUNLOP.

Castle Douglas, 25th June, 1794.

Here in a solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may. Solitary confinement, you know, is Howard's favourite idea of reclaiming sinners; so let me consider by what fatality it happens that I have so long been so exceeding sinful as to neglect the correspondence of the most valued friend I have on earth. To tell you that I have been in poor health, will not be excuse enough, though it is true. I am afraid I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth. My medical friends threaten me with a flying gout; but I trust they are mistaken.

I am just going to trouble your critical patience with the first sketch of a stanza I have been framing as I paced along the road. The subject is *liberty*. You know, my honoured friend, how dear the theme is to me. I design it an irregular ode for General Washington's birth-day. After having mentioned the degeneracy of other kingdoms, I come to Scotland thus:

Thee, Caledonia, thy wild heaths among,
Thee, famed for martial deed and sacred song,
To thee I turn with swimming eyes;
Where is that soul of freedom fled?
Immingled with the mighty dead!
Beneath that hallowed turf where Wallace lies!
Hear it not, Wallace, in thy bed of death!
Ye babbling winds, in silence weep;
Disturb not ye the hero's sleep,
Nor give the coward secret breath.—
Is this the power in freedom's war
That wont to bid the battle rage?
Behold that eye which shot immortal hate,
Crushing the despot's proudest bearing,
That arm, which, nerved with thundering fate,
Braved usurpation's boldest daring!
One quenched in darkness like the sinking star,
And one the palsied arm of tottering, powerless age.

You will probably have another scrawl from me in a stage or two.

No. LXI.

To Mr. JAMES JOHNSON.

My dear friend,

You should have heard from me long ago; but over and above some vexatious share in the pecu-

* The original letter is in the possession of the honourable Mrs. Holland, of Poynings. From a memorandum, on the back of the letter, it appears to have been written in May, 1794.

mary losses of these accursed times, I have all this winter been plagued with low spirits and blue devils, so that *I have almost hung my harp on the willow trees.*

I am just now busy correcting a new edition of my poems, and this, with my ordinary business, finds me in full employment*.

I send you by my friend Mr. Wallace forty-one songs for your fifth volume; if we cannot finish it in any other way, what would you think of Scots words to some beautiful Irish airs? In the mean time, at your leisure, give a copy of the Museum to my worthy friend Mr. Peter Hill, bookseller, to bind for me, interleaved with blank leaves, exactly as he did the laird of Glenriddel's†, that I may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs.—A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after period, by way of making the Museum a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever.

I have got an Highland dirk, for which I have great veneration; as it once was the dirk of *lord Balmerino*. It fell into bad hands, who stripped it of the silver mounting, as well as the knife and fork. I have some thoughts of sending it to your care, to get it mounted anew.

Thank you for the copies of my Volunteer Ballad.—Our friend Clarke has done *indeed* well! 'tis chaste and beautiful. I have not met with any thing that has pleased me so much. You know, I am no connoisseur; but that I am an amateur —will be allowed me.

No. LXII.

To Miss FONTENELLE,

Accompanying a Prologue to be spoken for her Benefit.

Madam,

In such a bad world as ours, those who add to the scanty sum of our pleasures, are positively our benefactors. To you, madam, on our humble Dumfries boards, I have been more indebted for entertainment than ever I was in prouder theatres. Your charms, as a woman, would insure applause to the most indifferent actress, and your theatrical talents would insure admiration to the plainest figure. This, madam, is not the unmeaning, or insidious compliment of the frivolous or interested; I pay it from the same honest impulse that the sublime of nature excites my admiration, or her beauties give me delight.

Will the foregoing lines be of any service to you on your approaching benefit night? If they will, I shall be prouder of my muse than ever. They are nearly extempore: I know they have no great merit; but though they should add but little to the entertainment of the evening, they give me the happiness of an opportunity to declare how much I have the honour to be, &c.

No. LXIII.

To PETER MILLER, Jun. Esq.* of Dalswinton.

Dumfries, Nov. 1794.

Dear sir,

Your offer is indeed truly generous, and most sincerely do I thank you for it; but in my present situation, I find that I dare not accept it. You well know my political sentiments; and were I an insular individual, unconnected with a wife and family of children, with the most fervid enthusiasm I would have volunteered my services: I then could and would have despised all consequences that might have ensued.

My prospect in the excise is something; at least, it is, incumbered as I am with the welfare, the very existence, of near half-a-score of helpless individuals, what I dare not sport with.

In the mean time they are most welcome to my ode; only, let them insert it as a thing they have met with by accident and unknown to me.—Nay, if Mr. Perry, whose honour, after your character of him, I cannot doubt; if he will give me an address and channel by which any thing will come safe from those spies with which he may be certain that his correspondence is beset, I will now and then send him any bagatelle that I may write. In the present hurry of Europe, nothing but news and politics will be regarded; but against the days of peace, which Heaven send soon, my little assistance may perhaps fill up an idle column of a newspaper. I have long had it in my head to try my hand in the way of little prose essays, which I propose sending into the world through the medium of some newspaper; and should these be worth his while, to these Mr. Perry shall be welcome; and all my reward shall be, his treating me with his paper, which, by the bye, to any body who has the least relish for wit, is a high treat indeed.

With the most grateful esteem, I am ever,
Dear sir, &c.

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* Burns's anxiety with regard to the correctness of his writings was very great. Being questioned as to his mode of composition, he replied, "All my poetry is the effect of easy composition, but of *laborious correction.*"

† This is the manuscript book, containing the remarks on Scottish songs and ballads, presented to the public, with considerable additions, in this volume.

* In a conversation with his friend Mr. Perry, (the proprietor of "The Morning Chronicle,") Mr. Miller represented to that gentleman the insufficiency of Burns's salary to answer the imperious demands of a numerous family. In their sympathy for his misfortunes, and in their regret that his talents were nearly lost to the world of letters, these gentlemen agreed on the plan of settling him in London.

To accomplish this most desirable object, Mr. Perry, very spiritedly, made the poet a handsome offer of an annual stipend for the exercise of his talents in his newspaper. Burns's reasons for refusing this offer are stated in the present letter.

E.

No. LXIV.

To GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

My dear sir, *Dumfries.*

It is indeed with the highest satisfaction that I congratulate you on the return of "days of ease, and nights of pleasure," after the horrid hours of misery, in which I saw you suffering existence when I was last in Ayrshire. I seldom pray for any body. "I'm baith dead sweer, and wretched ill o't." But most fervently do I beseech the great Director of this world, that you may live long and be happy, but that you may live no longer than while you are happy. It is needless for me to advise you to have a reverend care of your health. I know you will make it a point never, at one time, to drink more than a pint of wine; (I mean an English pint;) and that you will never be witness to more than one bowl of punch at a time; and that cold drams you will never more taste. I am well convinced too, that after drinking, perhaps boiling punch, you will never mount your horse and gallop home in a chill, late hour.—Above all things, as I understand you are now in habits of intimacy with that *Boanerges* of gospel powers, *father Auld**, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, or even practising the carnal moral works of *charity, humanity, generosity*, and *forgiveness*; things which you practised so flagrantly, that it was evident you delighted in them; neglecting, or perhaps profanely despising the *wholesome doctrine* of "Faith without works, the only anchor of salvation."

A hymn of thanksgiving would, in my opinion, be highly becoming for you at present; and in my zeal for your well-being I earnestly press it on you to be diligent in chanting over the two inclosed pieces of sacred poesy. My best compliments to Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy.

Yours in the L—d,

R. B.

No. LXV.

To Mr. SAMUEL CLARKE, Jun. Dumfries.

Sunday Morning.

Dear sir,

I was, I know, drunk last night, but I am sober this morning, From the expressions Capt. ——— made use of to me, had I had nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manners of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as, generally, I believe, end in a brace of pistols; but I am still pleased to think that I did not ruin the peace and welfare of a wife and a family of children in a drunken squabble. Further, you know that the report of certain political opinions being mine, has already once before brought me to the brink of destruction. I dread lest last night's business may be misrepresented in the same way.—You, I beg, will take care to prevent it. I tax your wish for Mr. Burns's welfare with the task of waiting, as soon as possible, on every gentleman who was present, and state this to him, and, as you please, shew him this letter. What, after all, was the obnoxious toast? "May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause."—A toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to. I request and beg that this morning you will wait on the parties present at the foolish dispute. I shall only add, that I am truly sorry that a man who stood so high in my estimation as Mr. ———, should use me in the manner in which I conceive he has done*.

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* *The Revd. Wm. Auld*, the then minister of Mauchline. This man was of a morose and malicious disposition; he had quarrelled with Mr. Gavin Hamilton's father, and sought every occasion of revenging himself on the son. Burns dearly loved Gavin Hamilton, and could not view this conduct with indifference: besides, father Auld in his religious tenets was highly Calvinistic, dealing damnation around him with no sparing hand. He was also superstitious and bigotted in the extreme:—excellent marks for the poet! The following specimens of father Auld will shew his desire to provoke and irritate Mr. Hamilton, and are a full display of the liberality of his sentiments in matters of religion.

He unwarrantably refused to christen Mr. Hamilton's child for the following reasons:—that Mr. Hamilton rode on Sundays—that he had ordered a person to dig a few potatoes in his garden on the Sabbath-day, (for which he was cited before the kirk!) He also charged him with dining in a public house on a *king's fast day*, with two gentlemen, and that they were even heard to *whistle* and *sing* after dinner.—Moreover, which was the heaviest and most awful charge of all—the, Mr. Auld, heard Gavin Hamilton say, "*D-mn it*," in his own presence!

All this idle and vexatious folly tended, as might be expected, to alienate the mind of Mr. Hamilton, both from the parson and his pulpit. Father Auld and his adherents charged him with neglect of religion and disrespect for its professors. The poet took his friend and patron's part, and repelled the attack by extolling Mr. Hamilton's elevation of sentiment, his readiness to forgive injuries, and, above all, his universal active benevolence. These excellent qualities Burns opposed to the fierceness, fanaticism, and monkish gloom of this class of priests. His sentiments on the subject are given in this letter with infinite address, and in a strain of sly, covert humour that he has seldom surpassed. He is equally sly, but more explicit in his poetical dedication of his works to Gavin Hamilton—In a copy, in the poet's writing, that I have seen, the circumstance of riding on the Sabbath-day is thus neatly introduced:

"He sometimes gallops on a Sunday,
An' pricks the beast as it were Monday."

E.

* At this period of our poet's life, when political animosity was made the ground of private

No. LXVI.

To Mr. ALEXANDER FINDLATER,

Supervisor of Excise, Dumfries.

Sir,

Inclosed are the two schemes. I would not have troubled you with the collector's one, but for suspicion lest it be not right. Mr. Erskine promised me to make it right, if you will have the goodness to shew him how. As I have no copy of the scheme for myself, and the alterations being very considerable from what it was formerly, I hope that I shall have access to this scheme I send you, when I come to face up my new books. *So much for schemes.*—And that no scheme to betray a *friend*, or mislead a *stranger*; to seduce a *young girl*, or rob a *hen-roost*; to subvert *liberty*, or bribe an *exciseman*; to disturb the *general assembly*, or annoy a *gossipping*; to overthrow the credit of *orthodoxy*, or the authority of *old songs*; to oppose *your wishes*, or frustrate *my hopes—may prosper* —is the sincere wish and prayer of

ROBERT BURNS.

No. LXVII.

TO THE EDITORS

OF THE MORNING CHRONICLE*.

Dumfries.

Gentlemen,

You will see by your subscribers' list, that I have now been about nine months one of that number.

I am sorry to inform you, that in that time, seven or eight of your papers either have never been sent me, or else have never reached me. To be deprived of any one number of the first newspaper in Great Britain for information, ability, and independence, is what I can ill brook and bear; but to be deprived of the most admirable oration of the marquis of Lansdowne, when he made the great, though ineffectual attempt (in the language of the poet, I fear too true) "to save a *sinking state*"—this was a loss which I neither can, nor will forgive you.—That paper, gentlemen, never reached me; but I demand it of you. I am a *Briton*; and must be interested in the cause of *liberty*:—I am a *man*; and the *rights* of *human nature* cannot be indifferent to me. However, do not let me mislead you: I am not a man in that situation of life, which, as your subscriber, can be of any consequence to you, in the eyes of those to whom *situation of life alone* is the criterion of *man*.—I am but a plain tradesman, in this distant, obscure country town: but that humble domicile in which I shelter my wife and children, is the *castellum* of a *Briton*; and that scanty hard-earned income which supports them, is as truly my property, as the most magnificent fortune of the most *puissant member* of your *house* of *nobles*.

These, gentlemen, are my sentiments; and to these I subscribe my name: and were I a man of ability and consequence enough to address the *public*, with that name should they appear.

I am, &c.

No. LXVIII.

To COL. W. DUNBAR.

I am not gone to Elysium, most noble colonel, but am still here in this sublunary world, serving my God by propagating his image, and honouring my king by begetting him loyal subjects. Many happy returns of the season await my friend! May the thorns of care never beset his path! May peace be an inmate of his bosom, and rapture a frequent visitor of his soul! May the blood-hounds of misfortune never trace his steps, nor the screech-

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quarrel, the following foolish verses were sent as an attack on Burns and his friends for their political opinions. They were written by some member of a club, styling themselves the *Loyal Natives* of Dumfries, or rather by the united genius of that club, which was more distinguished for drunken loyalty, than either for respectability or poetical talent. The verses were handed over the table to Burns at a convivial meeting, and he instantly indorsed the subjoined reply.

The *Loyal Natives'* Verses.

Ye sons of sedition, give ear to my song,
Let Syme, *Burns*, and Maxwell, pervade every throng,
With Craken the attorney, and Mundell the quack,
Send Willie the monger to hell with a smack.

Burns—extempore.

Ye true "Loyal Natives," attend to my song,
In uproar and riot rejoice the night long;
From *envy* and hatred your corps is exempt;
But where is your shield from the *darts of contempt?*

* This letter owes its origin to the following circumstance. A neighbour of the poet's at Dumfries, called on him and complained that he was greatly disappointed in the irregular delivery of the paper of *The Morning Chronicle*. Burns asked, "Why do you not write to the editors of the paper?" Good God, sir, can *I* presume to write to the learned editors of a newspaper?—Well, if *you* are afraid of writing to the editor of a newspaper, *I* am not; and if you think proper, I'll draw up a sketch of a letter, which you may copy.

Burns tore a leaf from his excise book, and instantly produced the sketch which I have transcribed, and which is here printed. The poor man thanked him, and took the letter home. However, that caution which the watchfulness of his enemies had taught him to exercise, prompted him to the prudence of begging a friend to wait on the person for whom it was written, and request the favour to have it returned. This request was complied with, and the paper never appeared in print.

E.

owl of sorrow alarm his dwelling! May enjoyment tell thy hours, and pleasure number thy days, thou friend of the bard! Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee.

No. LXIX.

To Mr. HERON, of Heron.

Sir,

I inclose you some copies of a couple of political ballads; one of which, I believe, you have never seen. Would to Heaven I could make you master of as many votes in the Stewartry. But—

" Who does the utmost that he can,
" Does well, acts nobly, angels could no more."

In order to bring my humble efforts to bear with more effect upon the foe, I have privately printed a good many copies of both ballads, and have sent them among friends all about the country.

To pillory on Parnassus the rank reprobation of character, the utter dereliction of all principle, in a profligate junto, which has not only outraged virtue, but violated common decency; which, spurning even hypocrisy as paltry iniquity below their daring;—to unmask their flagitiousness to the broadest day—to deliver such over to their merited fate, is surely not merely innocent, but laudable; is not only propriety, but virtue.—You have already, as your auxiliary, the sober detestation of mankind on the heads of your opponents; and I swear by the lyre of Thalia to muster on your side all the votaries of honest laughter, and fair, candid ridicule.

I am extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests in a letter which Mr. Syme shewed me. At present, my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisors' list, and as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed, *of course*. *Then*, a *friend* might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about one hundred and twenty, to two hundred a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor, in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collector's list; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list; and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me to say that I do not need, or would not be indebted to a political friend; at the same time, sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus, to hook my dependant situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I shall petition your goodness with the same frankness as I now do myself the honour to subscribe myself, &c.*

No. LXX.

ADDRESS

Of

THE SCOTS DISTILLERS,

To

THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM PITT.

Sir,

While pursy burgesses crowd your gate, sweating under the weight of heavy addresses, permit us, the quondam distillers in that part of Great Britain called Scotland, to approach you, not with venal approbation, but with fraternal condolence; not as what you are just now, or for some time have been, but as what, in all probability, you will shortly be.—We shall have the merit of not deserting our friends in the day of their calamity, and you will have the satisfaction of perusing at least one honest address. You are well acquainted with the dissection of human nature; nor do you need the assistance of a fellow-creature's bosom to inform you, that man is always a selfish, often a perfidious being.—This assertion, however the hasty conclusions of superficial observation may doubt of it, or the raw inexperience of youth may deny it, those who make the fatal experiment we have done, will feel.—You are a statesman, and consequently are not ignorant of the traffic of these corporation compliments.—The little great man who drives the borough to market, and the very great man who buys the borough in that market, they two do the whole business; and you well know, they, likewise, have their price.—With that sullen disdain which you can so well assume, rise, illustrious sir, and spurn these hireling efforts of venal stupidity. At best they are the compliments of a man's friends on the morning of his execution: they take a decent farewel; resign you to your fate; and hurry away from your approaching hour.

If fame say true, and omens be not very much mistaken, you are about to make your exit from that world where the sun of gladness gilds the path of prosperous men; permit us, great sir, with the sympathy of fellow-feeling, to hail your passage to the realms of ruin.

Whether the sentiment proceed from the selfishness or cowardice of mankind is immaterial; but to point out to a child of misfortune those who are still more unhappy, is to give them some degree of positive enjoyment. In this light, sir, our downfal may be again of use to you:—though not exactly in the same way, it is not perhaps the first

* Part of this letter appears in *General Correspondence*, No. CXLII.

time it has gratified your feelings. It is true, the triumph of your evil star is exceedingly despiteful.—At an age when others are the votaries of pleasure, or underlings in business, you had attained the highest wish of a British statesman; and with the ordinary date of human life, what a prospect was before you! Deeply rooted in *royal favour*, you overshadowed the land. The birds of passage, which follow ministerial sunshine through every clime of political faith and manners, flocked to your branches; and the beasts of the field (the lordly possessors of hills and valleys) crowded under your shade. "But behold a watcher, a holy one came down from the heaven, and cried aloud, and said thus: hew down the tree, and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches!" A blow from an unthought-of quarter, one of those terrible accidents which peculiarly mark the hand of Omnipotence, overset your career, and laid all your fancied honours in the dust. But turn your eyes, sir, to the tragic scenes of our fate.—An ancient nation, that, for many ages, had gallantly maintained the unequal struggle for independence with her much more powerful neighbour, at last agrees to a union which should ever after make them one people. In consideration of certain circumstances, it was covenanted that the former should enjoy a stipulated alleviation in her share of the public burdens, particularly in that branch of the revenue called the excise. This just privilege has of late given great umbrage to some interested, powerful individuals of the more potent part of the empire, and they have spared no wicked pains, under insidious pretexts, to subvert what they dared not openly attack, from the dread which they yet entertained of the spirit of their ancient enemies.

In this conspiracy we fell; nor did we alone suffer; our country was deeply wounded. A number of (we will say) respectable individuals, largely engaged in trade, where we were not only useful but absolutely necessary to our country in her dearest interests; we, with all that was near and dear to us, were sacrificed without remorse, to the infernal deity of political expediency! We fell to gratify the wishes of dark envy, and the views of unprincipled ambition! Your foes, sir, were avowed; were too brave to take an ungenerous advantage; *you* fell in the face of day. On the contrary, our enemies, to complete our overthrow, contrived to make their guilt appear the villainy of a nation. Your downfall only drags with you your private friends and partisans: in our misery are more or less involved the most numerous, and most valuable part of the community—all those who immediately depend on the cultivation of the soil, from the landlord of a province, down to his lowest hind.

Allow us, sir, yet farther, just to hint at another rich vein of comfort in the dreary regions of adversity;—the gratification of an approving conscience. In a certain great assembly, of which you are a distinguished member, panegyries on your private virtues have so often wounded your delicacy, that we shall not distress you with any thing on the subject. There is, however, one part of your public conduct which our feelings will not permit us to pass in silence; our gratitude must trespass on your modesty: we mean, worthy sir, your whole behaviour to the Scots distillers. In evil hours, when obtrusive recollection presses bitterly on the sense, let that, sir, come like a healing angel, and speak the peace to your soul which the world can neither give nor take away.

We have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your sympathising fellow-sufferers,
And grateful humble servants,
JOHN BARLEYCORN—Præses.

No. LXXI.

To the Hon. the PROVOST, BAILIES, and TOWN COUNCIL of Dumfries.

Gentlemen,

The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, with my large family, and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high school-fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me.

Some years ago your good town did me the honour of making me an honorary burgess.—Will you allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far, as to put me on the footing of a real freeman of the town, in the schools?

* * * *

If you are so very kind as to grant my request*, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where I can officially serve you; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,
Your devoted humble servant.

No. LXXII.

To Mr. JAMES JOHNSON, Edinburgh.

Dumfries, July 4, 1796.

How are you, my dear friend, and how comes on your fifth volume? You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but, alas! the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care, has these many months lain heavy on me! Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural muse of Scotia.

* * * *

* This request was immediately complied with. I am happy to have an opportunity of mentioning, with great respect, *Mr. James Gray*. At the time of the poet's death, this gentleman was rector of the Grammar School of Dumfries, and is now one of the masters of the High School of Edinburgh. He has uniformly exerted himself in the most benevolent manner, in the education and welfare of the poet's sons. P.

You are a good, worthy, honest fellow, and have a good right to live in this world--because you deserve it. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far other and more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit, or the pathos of sentiment! However, *hope* is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can.

Let me hear from you as soon as convenient.--Your work is a great one; and now that it is near finished, I see, if we were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended; yet I will venture to propheey, that to future ages your publication will be the text book and standard of Scottish song and music.

I am ashamed to ask another favour of you, because you have been so very good already; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers, a young lady who sings well, to whom she wishes to present the *Scots Musical Museum**. If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the very first *fly*, as I am anxious to have it soon?

Yours, ever,
ROBERT BURNS.

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* In this humble and delicate manner did poor Burns ask for a copy of a work of which he was principally the founder, and to which he had contributed, *gratuitously*, not less than 184 *original, altered, and collected songs!* The editor has seen 180 transcribed by his own hand, for the *Museum*.

This letter was written on the 4th of July,--the poet died on the 21st. No other letters of this interesting period have been discovered, except one addressed to Mrs. Dunlop, of the 12th of July, which Dr. Currie very properly supposes to be the last production of the dying bard. E.

STRICTURES

ON

SCOTTISH SONGS AND BALLADS,

ANCIENT AND MODERN;

WITH

ANECDOTES OF THEIR AUTHORS.

" There needs na' be so great a phrase
Wi' dringing dull Italian lays,
I wad na gie our ain strathspeys
For half a hundred score o' em:
They're dowff and dowie at the best,
Douff and dowie, douff and dowie;
They're douff and dowie at the best,
Wi' a' their variorum:
They're douff and dowie at the best,
Their allegros, and a' the rest,
They cannot please a Scottish taste,
Compar'd wi' Tullochgorum."

Rev. John Skinner.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The chief part of the following remarks on Scottish songs and ballads exist in the hand-writing of *Robert Burns*, in an interleaved copy, in four volumes, octavo, of "*Johnson's Scots Musical Museum*." They were written by the poet for *captain Riddel*, of *Glenriddel*, whose autograph the volumes bear. These valuable volumes were left by *Mrs. Riddel*, to her niece, *miss Eliza Bayley*, of *Manchester*, by whose kindness the editor is enabled to give to the public transcripts of this amusing and miscellaneous collection.

STRICTURES, &c.

The Highland Queen.

The Highland Queen, music and poetry, was composed by Mr. M'Vicar, purser of the Solbay man of war.--This I had from Dr. Blacklock.

—

Bess the Gawkie.

This song shows that the Scottish muses did not all leave us when we lost Ramsay and Oswald*, as I have good reason to believe that the verses and music are both posterior to the days of these two gentlemen. It is a beautiful song, and is in the genuine Scots taste. We have few pastoral compositions, I mean the pastoral of nature, that are equal to this.

—

Oh, open the Door, Lord Gregory.

It is somewhat singular, that in Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, Wigton, Kirkcudbright, and Dumfriesshires, there is scarcely an old song or tune which, from the title, &c. can be guessed to belong to, or be the production of these counties. This, I conjecture, is one of these few; as the ballad, which is a long one, is called, both by tradition and printed collections, "The Lass o' Lochroyan," which I take to be Lochroyan, in Galloway.

—

The Banks of the Tweed.

This song is one of the many attempts that English composers have made to imitate the Scottish manner, and which I shall, in these strictures, beg leave to distinguish by the appellation of Anglo-Scottish productions. The music is pretty good, but the verses are just above contempt.

* Oswald was a music-seller in London, about the year 1750. He published a large collection of Scottish tunes, which he called the Caledonian Pocket Companion. Mr. Tytler observes, that his genius in composition, joined to his taste in the performance of Scottish music, was natural and pathetic. *Ritson.*

The Beds of sweet Roses.

This song, as far as I know, for the first time appears here in print. When I was a boy, it was a very popular song in Ayrshire. I remember to have heard those fanatics, the Buchanites*, sing some of their nonsensical rhymes, which they dignify with the name of hymns, to this air†.

—

Roslin Castle.

These beautiful verses were the production of a Richard Hewitt‡, a young man that Dr. Blacklock, to whom I am indebted for the anecdote, kept for some years as an amanuensis. I do not know who is the author of the second song to the tune. Tytler, in his amusing history of Scots music, gives the air to Oswald; but in Oswald's own collection of Scots tunes, where he affixes an asterisk to those he himself composed, he does not make the least claim to the tune.

—

Saw ye Johnnie commin? quo' she.

This song, for genuine humour in the verses, and lively originality in the air, is unparalleled. I take it to be very old.

* A set of itinerant fanatics in the west of Scotland, so denominated from their leader, Mrs. Buchan.

† Shakspeare, in his Winter's Tale, speaks of a *puritan*, who "*sings psalms to hornpipes.*"

‡ Richard Hewit, Ritson observes, was taken when a boy, during the residence of Dr. Blacklock in Cumberland, to lead him. He addressed a copy of verses to the doctor on quitting his service.--Among the verses are the following lines:

"How oft these plains I've thoughtless prest;
Whistled or sung some fair distrest,
When fate would steal a tear."

"Alluding," as it is said in a note, "to a sort of narrative songs, which make no inconsiderable part of the innocent amusements with which the country people pass the wintry nights, and of which the author of the present piece was a faithful rehearser."--*Blacklock's Poems*, 1756, 8*vo. p.* 5.

Clout the Caldron.

A tradition is mentioned in the *Bee*, that the second bishop Chisholm, of Dunblane, used to say, that if he were going to be hanged, nothing would soothe his mind so much by the way, as to hear *Clout the Caldron* played.

I have met with another tradition, that the old song to this tune

"Hae ye ony pots or pans,
Or onie broken chanlers,"

was composed on one of the Kenmure family, in the cavalier times; and alluded to an amour he had, while under hiding, in the disguise of an itinerant tinker. The air is also known by the name of

"The blacksmith and his apron,"

which, from the rhythm, seems to have been a line of some old song to the tune.

—

Saw ye my Peggy.

This charming song is much older, and indeed superior to Ramsay's verses, "The Toast," as he calls them. There is another set of the words, much older still, and which I take to be the original one. But though it has a very great deal of merit, it is not quite ladies' reading.

The original words, for they can scarcely be called verses, seem to be as follows; a song familiar from the cradle to every Scottish ear.

Saw ye my Maggie,
Saw ye my Maggie,
Saw ye my Maggie
Linkin o'er the lea?

High kilted was she,
High kilted was she,
High kilted was she,
Her coat aboon her knee.

What mark has your Maggie,
What mark has your Maggie,
What mark has your Maggie
That ane may ken her *be? (by)*

Though it by no means follows that the silliest verses to an air must, for that reason, be the original song; yet I take this ballad, of which I have quoted part, to be the old verses. The two songs in Ramsay, one of them evidently his own, are never to be met with in the fire-side circle of our peasantry; while that which I take to be the old song, is in every shepherd's mouth. Ramsay, I suppose, had thought the old verses unworthy a place in his collection.

—

The Flowers of Edinburgh.

This song is one of the many effusions of Scots jacobitism.—The title, "Flowers of Edinburgh," has no manner of connexion with the present verses, so I suspect there has been an older set of words, of which the title is all that remains.

By the bye, it is singular enough that the Scottish muses were all jacobites. I have paid more attention to every description of Scots songs than perhaps any body living has done, and I do not recollect one single stanza, or even the title of the most trifling Scots air, which has the least panegyrical reference to the families of Nassau or Brunswick; while there are hundreds satirizing them. This may be thought no panegyric on the Scots poets, but I mean it as such. For myself, I would always take it as a compliment to have it said, that my heart ran before my head.—And surely the gallant, though unfortunate house of Stewart, the kings of our fathers for so many heroic ages, is a theme * * * * * * * * * * *

—

Jamie Gay.

Jamie Gay is another and a tolerable Anglo-Scottish piece.

—

My dear Jockie.

Another Anglo-Scottish production.

—

Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' Strae.

It is self-evident that the first four lines of this song are part of a song more ancient than Ramsay's beautiful verses which are annexed to them. As music is the language of nature; and poetry, particularly songs, are always less or more localized (if I may be allowed the verb) by some of the modifications of time and place, this is the reason why so many of our Scots airs have outlived their original, and perhaps many subsequent sets of verses; except a single name, or phrase, or sometimes one or two lines, simply to distinguish the tunes by.

To this day, among people who know nothing of Ramsay's verses, the following is the song, and all the song that ever I heard:—

Gin ye meet a bonnie lassie,
Gie her a kiss and let her gae;
But gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.

Fye, gae rub her, rub her, rub her,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae:
An' gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.

—

The Lass o' Liviston.

The old song in three eight line stanzas, is well known, and has merit as to wit and humour; but it is rather unfit for insertion.—It begins,

The bonnie lass o' Liviston,
Her name ye ken, her name ye ken,
And she has written in her contract,
To lie her lane, to lie her lane.
&c. &c.

—

The last Time I came o'er the Moor.

Ramsay found the first line of this song, which had been preserved as the title of the charming air, and then composed the rest of the verses to suit that line. This has always a finer effect than composing English words, or words with an idea foreign to the spirit of the old title. Where old titles of songs convey any idea at all, it will generally be found to be quite in the spirit of the air.

—

Jockie's Gray Breeks.

Though this has certainly every evidence of being a Scottish air, yet there is a well-known tune and song in the north of Ireland, called *The Weaver and his Shuttle O*, which, though sung much quicker, is every note the very tune.

—

The Happy Marriage.

Another, but very pretty, Anglo-Scottish piece.

—

The Lass of Peaty's Mill.

In Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, this song is localized (a verb I must use for want of another to express my idea) somewhere in the north of Scotland, and likewise is claimed by Ayrshire. The following anecdote I had from the present sir William Cunningham of Robertland, who had it from the last John, earl of Loudon.—The then earl of Loudon, and father to earl John before mentioned, had Ramsay at Loudon, and one day walking together by the banks of Irvine water, near New-Mills, at a place yet called Peaty's Mill, they were struck with the appearance of a beautiful country girl. His lordship observed that she would be a fine theme for a song. Allan lagged behind in returning to Loudon castle, and at dinner produced this identical song*.

—

The Turnimspike.

There is a stanza of this excellent song for local humour, omitted in this set,—where I have placed the asterisms†.

They tak the horse then by te head,
And tere tey mak her stan', man;
Me tell tem, me hae seen te day,
Tey no had sie comman', man.

—

Highland Laddie.

As this was a favourite theme with our later Scottish muses, there are several airs and songs of that name. That which I take to be the oldest, is to be found in the *Musical Museum*, beginning, "I hae been at Crookie-den." One reason for my thinking so is, that Oswald has it in his collection by the name of "The auld Highland Laddie." It it also known by the name of "Jinglan Johnie," which is a well-known song of four or five stanzas, and seems to be an earlier song than jacobite times. As a proof of this, it is little known to the peasantry by the name of "Highland Laddie;" while every body knows "Jinglan Johnie." The song begins,

Jinglan John, the meickle man,
He met wi' a lass was blythe and bonnie.

Another *Highland Laddie* is also in the Museum, vol. v, which I take to be Ramsay's original, as he has borrowed the chorus—"O my bonnie Highland lad, &c." It consists of three stanzas, besides the chorus; and has humour in its composition—it is an excellent, but somewhat licentious song. It begins

As I cam o'er Cairney-Mount,
And down amang the blooming heather, &c.

This air, and the common Highland Laddie, seem only to be different sets.

Another Highland Laddie, also in the Museum, vol. v, is the tune of several jacobite fragments. One of these old songs to it, only exists, as far as I know, in these four lines—

Whare hae ye been a' day,
Bonnie laddie, highland laddie?
Down the back o' Bell's brae,
Courtin Maggie, courtin Maggie.

Another of this name is Dr. Arne's beautiful air, called, the new Highland Laddie*.

—

The Gentle Swain.

To sing such a beautiful air to such execrable verses, is downright * * * of common sense! The Scots verses indeed are tolerable.

* The following observation was found in a memorandum book belonging to the poet.

The Highlanders' prayer, at Sheriff-Muir.

"O L—d, be thou with us; but if thou be *not* with us, be not against us; *but leave it between the red coats and us!*"

* This anecdote is somewhat differently told in *General Correspondence, No.* 19.

† Burns has placed the asterisms between the 9th and 10th verses.

He stole my tender Heart away.

This is an Anglo-Scottish production, but by no means a bad one.

—

Fairest of the Fair.

It is too barefaced to take Dr. Percy's charming song, and by the means of changing a few English words into Scots, to offer to pass it for a Scots song. I was not acquainted with the editor until the first volume was nearly finished, else, had I known in time, I would have prevented such an impudent absurdity.

—

The Blaithrie o't.*

The following is a set of this song, which was the earliest song I remember to have got by heart. When a child, an old woman sung it to me, and I picked it up, every word, at first hearing.

O Willy, weel I mind, I lent you my hand,
To sing you a song which you did me command;
But my memory's so bad, I had almost forgot
That you called it the gear and the blaithrie o't.--

I'll not sing about confusion, delusion, or pride,
I'll sing about a laddie was for a virtuous bride;
For virtue is an ornament that time will never rot,
And preferable to gear and the blaithrie o't.--

Tho' my lassie hae nae scarlets or silks to put on,
We envy not the greatest that sits upon the throne;
I wad rather hae my lassie, tho' she cam in her smock,
Than a princess wi' the gear and the blaithrie o't.—

Tho' we hae nae horses or minzie† at command,
We will toil on our foot, and we'll work wi' our hand;
And when wearied without rest, we'll find it sweet in any spot,
And we'll value not the gear and the blaithrie o't.—

If we hae ony babies, we'll count them as lent;
Hae we less, hae we mair, we will aye be content;
For they say they hae mair pleasure that wins but a groat,
Than the miser wi' his gear and the blaithrie o't.—

I'll not meddle wi' th' affairs o' the kirk or the queen;
They're nae matters for a sang, let them sink, let them swim,
On your kirk I'll ne'er encroach, but I'll hold it still remote,
Sae tak this for the gear and the blaithrie o't.

* "*Shame fall the geer and the blad'ry o't,*" is the turn of an old Scottish song, spoken when a young handsome girl marries an old man, upon the account of his wealth.

Kelly's Scots Proverbs, p. 296.

† *Minzie*—retinue—followers.

May Eve, or Kate of Aberdeen.

Kate of Aberdeen, is, I believe, the work of poor Cunningham the player, of whom the following anecdote, though told before, deserves a recital. A fat dignitary of the church coming past Cunningham one *Sunday* as the poor poet was busy plying a fishing-rod in some stream near Durham, his native country*, his reverence reprimanded Cunningham very severely for such an occupation on such a day. The poor poet, with that inoffensive gentleness of manners, which was his peculiar characteristic, replied, that he hoped God and his reverence would forgive his seeming profanity of that sacred day, "*as he had no dinner to eat, but what lay at the bottom of that pool!*" This, Mr. Woods, the player, who knew Cunningham well, and esteemed him much, assured me was true.

—

Tweed-Side.

In Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany, he tells us, that about thirty of the songs in that publication were the works of some young gentlemen of his acquaintance; which songs are marked with the letters D, C, &c.—Old Mr. Tytler, of Woodhouselee, the worthy and able defender of the beauteous queen of Scots, told me that the songs marked C, in the *Tea-Table*, were the composition of a Mr. Crawford, of the house of Achnames, who was afterwards unfortunately drowned coming from France. As Tytler was most intimately acquainted with Allan Ramsay, I think the anecdote may be depended on. Of consequence, the beautiful song of Tweed-Side is Mr. Crawford's, and indeed does great honour to his poetical talents. He was a Robert Crawford; the Mary he celebrates, was a Mary Stewart, of the Castle-Milk family†, afterwards married to a Mr. John Ritchie.

I have seen a song, calling itself the original Tweed-Side, and said to have been composed by a lord Yester. It consisted of two stanzas, of which I still recollect the first.—

When Maggy and I was acquaint,
I carried my noddle fu' hie;
Nae lintwhite on a' the green plain,
Nor gowdspink sae happy as me;
But I saw her sae fair, and I lo'ed;
I woo'd, but I came nae great speed;
So now I maun wander abroad,
And lay my banes far frae the Tweed.

—

The Posie.

It appears evident to me, that Oswald composed his *Roslin Castle* on the modulation of this air.

* Cunningham was a native of Ireland.—See *Dr. Anderson's Life of Cunningham*, *British Poets*, vol. x.

† If the reader refers to the note in page 384, he will there find that Mr. *Walter Scott* states this

In the second part of Oswald's, in the three first bars, he has either hit on a wonderful similarity to, or else he has entirely borrowed the three first bars of the old air; and the close of both tunes is almost exactly the same. The old verses to which it was sung, when I took down the notes from a country girl's voice, had no great merit.—The following is a specimen:

There was a pretty may* and a milkin she went;
Wi' her red rosy cheeks, and her coal-black hair:
And she has met a young man a comin o'er the bent,
With a double and adieu to thee, fair may.

O where are ye goin, my ain pretty may,
Wi' thy red rosy cheeks, and thy coal-black hair?
Unto the yowes a milkin, kind sir, she says,
With a double and adieu to thee, fair may.

What if I gang alang wi' thee, my ain pretty may,
Wi' thy red rosy cheeks, and thy coal-black hair?
Wad I be aught the warse o' that, kind sir, she says,
With a double and adieu to thee, fair may.
&c. &c.

—

Mary's Dream†.

The Mary here alluded to, is generally supposed to be miss Mary Maeghie, daughter to the laird of Airds, in Galloway. The poet was a Mr. Alexander Lowe, who likewise wrote another beautiful song, called Pompey's Ghost.—I have seen a poetical epistle from him in North America, where he now is, or lately was, to a lady in Scotland. By the strain of the verses, it appeared that they allude to some love disappointment.

—

The maid that tends the Goats.

By Mr. Dudgeon.

This Dudgeon is a respectable farmer's son in Berwickshire.

—

I wish my Love were in a Mire.

I never heard more of the words of this old song, than the title.

—

Allan Water.

This Allan Water, which the composer of the music has honoured with the name of the air, I have been told, is Allan Water in Strathallan.

—

There's nae Luck about the House.

This is one of the most beautiful songs in the Scots, or any other language.—The two lines,

"And will I see his face again!
And will I hear him speak!"

as well as the two preceding ones, are unequalled almost by any thing I ever heard or read: and the lines,

"The present moment is our ain,
The neist we never saw"—

are worthy of the first poet. It is long posterior to Ramsay's days. About the year 1771, or 72, it came first on the streets as a ballad; and I suppose the composition of the song was not much anterior to that period.

—

Tarry Woo.

This is a very pretty song; but I fancy that the first half stanza, as well as the tune itself, are much older than the rest of the words.

—

Gramachree.

The song of *Gramachree* was composed by a Mr. Poe, a counsellor at law in Dublin. This anecdote I had from a gentleman who knew the lady, the "Molly," who is the subject of the song, and to whom Mr. Poe sent the first manuscript of his most beautiful verses. I do not remember any single line that has more true pathos than—

"How can she break that honest heart that wears
her in its core!"

But as the song is Irish, it had nothing to do in this collection.

—

The Collier's Bonnie Lassie.

The first half stanza is much older than the days of Ramsay.—The old words began thus:

The collier has a dochter, and, O, she's wonder bonnie!
A laird he was that sought her, rich baith in lands and money:
She wad na hae a laird, nor wad she be a lady;
But she wad hae a collier, the colour o' her daddie.

---

song to have been written in honour of another lady, a *miss Mary Lilias Scott.*

* *May*—maid—young woman.

† This is the pathetic song, beginning—

"The moon had climb'd the highest hill,
Which rises o'er the source of Dee,
And from the eastern summit shed
Her silver light on tow'r and tree:
When Mary laid her down to sleep,
Her thoughts on Sandy far at sea;
When soft and low a voice was heard,
Saying, Mary, weep no more for me."

My ain kind Dearie—O.

The old words of this song are omitted here, though much more beautiful than these inserted; which were mostly composed by poor Fergusson, in one of his merry humours.—The old words began thus:

I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O,
I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O.
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wat,
And I were ne'er sae weary, O,
I'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O.

—

Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow.*

Mr. Robertson, in his statistical account of the parish of Selkirk, says, that Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow, was descended from the Dryhope, and married into the Harden family. Her daughter was married to a predecessor of the present sir Francis Elliot, of Stobbs, and of the late lord Heathfield.

There is a circumstance in their contract of marriage that merits attention, as it strongly marks the predatory spirit of the times. The father-in-law agrees to keep his daughter, for some time after the marriage; for which the son-in-law binds himself to give him the profits of the first Michaelmas-moon†!

—

Down the Burn, Davie.

I have been informed that the tune of "Down the Burn, Davie," was the composition of David Maigh, keeper of the blood slough hounds, belonging to the laird of Riddel, in Tweeddale.

—

Blink o'er the Burn, sweet Bettie.

The old words, all that I remember are,—

Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,
It is a cauld winter night;
It rains, it hails, it thunders,
The moon she gies nae light:
It's a' for the sake o' sweet Betty,
That ever I tint my way;
Sweet, let me lie beyond thee
Until it be break o' day.—
O, Betty will bake my bread,
And Betty will brew my ale,
And Betty will be my love,
When I come over the dale:
Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,
Blink over the burn to me,
And while I hae life, dear lassie,
My ain sweet Betty thou's be.—

—

The Blithsome Bridal.

I find the Blithsome Bridal in James Watson's collection of Scots poems, printed at Edinburgh, in 1706. This collection, the publisher says, is the first of its nature which has been published in our own native Scots dialect—it is now extremely scarce.

—

John Hay's Bonnie Lassie.

John Hay's Bonnie Lassie was daughter of John Hay, earl or marquis of Tweeddale, and late countess dowager of Roxburgh.—She died at Broomlands, near Kelso, some time between the years 1720 and 1740.

—

The Bonnie Brucket Lassie.

The two first lines of this song are all of it that is old. The rest of the song, as well as those songs in the *Museum* marked T, are the works of an obscure, tippling, but extraordinary body of the name of Tytler, commonly known by the name of Balloon Tytler, from his having projected a balloon: a mortal, who, though he drudges about Edinburgh as a common printer, with leaky shoes, sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles as unlike as George-by-the-grace-of-God, and Solomon-the-son-of-David; yet, that same unknown drunken mortal, is author and compiler of three-fourths of Elliot's pompous Encyclopedia Britannica, which he composed at half a guinea a week*!

* A very interesting account of the "Flower of Yarrow" appears in a note to Mr. Walter Scott's "*Marmion*." The editor has so often experienced that gentleman's obliging disposition, that he presumes on his pardon for transcribing it.

"Near the lower extremity of St. Mary's Lake, (a beautiful sheet of water, forming the reservoir from which the Yarrow takes its source,) are the ruins of Dryhope tower, the birth-place of Mary Scott, daughter of Philip Scott of Dryhope, and famous by the traditional name of the Flower of Yarrow. She was married to Walter Scott of Harden, no less renowned for his depredations, than his bride for her beauty. Her romantic appellation was, in latter days, with equal justice, conferred on miss Mary Lilias Scott, the last of the elder branch of the Harden family." Mr. Scott proceeds to relate that "he well remembers the talent and spirit of the latter Flower of Yarrow, though age had then injured the charms which procured her the name; and that the words usually sung to the air of "Tweed-Side," beginning, 'What beauties does Flora disclose,' were composed in her honour."—*Notes to* canto II. p. 38.

† The time when the moss-troopers and cattle-drivers on the borders, begin their nightly depredations.

* A short sketch of this eccentric character may be seen at the end of these remarks on the Scottish songs.

Sae merry as we twa hae been.

This song is beautiful.—The chorus in particular is truly pathetic. I never could learn any thing of its author.

Chorus.

Sae merry as we twa hae been,
Sae merry as we twa hae been;
My heart it is like for to break,
When I think on the days we hae seen.

—

The Banks of Forth.

This air is Oswald's.

—

The Bush aboon Traquair.

This is another beautiful song of Mr. Crawford's composition. In the neighbourhood of Traquair, tradition still shows the old "Bush;" which, when I saw it in the year 1787, was composed of eight or nine ragged birches. The earl of Traquair has planted a clump of trees near by, which he calls "The new Bush."

—

Cromlet's Lilt.

The following interesting account of this plaintive dirge was communicated to Mr. Riddel by Alexander Frazer Tytler, esq., of Woodhouselee.

"In the latter end of the 16th century, the Chisolms were proprietors of the estate of Cromleck (now possessed by the Drummonds). The eldest son of that family was very much attached to a daughter of Sterling of Ardoch, commonly known by the name of Fair Helen of Ardoch.

"At that time the opportunities of meeting betwixt the sexes were more rare, consequently more sought after than now; and the Scottish ladies, far from priding themselves on extensive literature, were thought sufficiently book-learned, if they could make out the Scriptures in their mother tongue. Writing was entirely out of the line of female education: at that period, the most of our young men of family sought a fortune, or found a grave, in France. Cromlus, when he went abroad to the war, was obliged to leave the management of his correspondence with his mistress, to a lay brother of the monastery of Dumblain, in the immediate neighbourhood of Cromleck, and near Ardoch. This man, unfortunately, was deeply sensible of Helen's charms. He artfully prepossessed her with stories to the disadvantage of Cromlus; and, by misinterpreting or keeping up the letters and messages intrusted to his care, he entirely irritated both. All connexion was broken off betwixt them: Helen was inconsolable, and Cromlus has left behind him, in the ballad called Cromlet's Lilt, a proof of the elegance of his genius, as well as the steadiness of his love.

"When the artful monk thought time had sufficiently softened Helen's sorrow, he proposed himself as a lover: Helen was obdurate: but at last, overcome by the persuasions of her brother with whom she lived, and who, having a family of thirty-one children, was probably very well pleased to get her off his hands, she submitted, rather than consented to the ceremony; but there her compliance ended; and, when forcibly put into bed, she started quite frantic from it, screaming out, that, after three gentle taps on the wainscot, at the bed head, she heard Cromlus's voice, crying, *Helen, Helen, mind me.* Cromlus soon after coming home, the treachery of the confidant was discovered,—her marriage disannulled,—and Helen became lady Cromlecks."

N. B. Marg. Murray, mother to these thirty-one children, was daughter to Murray of Strewn, one of the seventeen sons of Tullybardine, and whose youngest son, commonly called the Tutor of Ardoch, died in the year 1715, aged 111 years.

—

My Dearie, if thou die.

Another beautiful song of Crawford's.

—

She rose and let me in.

The oldest set of this song, which is still to be found in printed collections, is much prettier than this; but somebody, I believe it was Ramsay, took it into his head to clear it of some seeming indelicacies, and made it at once chaste and more dull.

—

Go to the Ewe-bughts, Marion.*

I am not sure if this old and charming air be of the south, as is commonly said, or of the north of Scotland. There is a song, apparently as ancient as "Ewe-bughts, Marion," which sings to the same tune, and is evidently of the north. It begins thus:

The lord o' Gordon had three dochters,
Mary, Marget, and Jean,
They wad na stay at bonnie castle Gordon,
But awa to Aberdeen.

—

Lewis Gordon†.

This air is a proof how one of our Scots tunes comes to be composed out of another. I have one

* Sheep-folds.

† The supposed author of Lewis Gordon was a Mr. Geddes, priest, at Shenval, in the Ainzie. R. B.

of the earliest copies of the song, and it has prefixed,

" Tune of Tarry Woo,"—

of which tune, a different set has insensibly varied into a different air. To a Scots critic, the pathos of the line,

" Tho' his back be at the wa',"

must be very striking.—It needs not a jacobite prejudice to be affected with this song.

—

Oh ono Chrio.*

Dr. Blacklock informed me, that this song was composed on the infamous massacre of Glencoe.

—

I'll never leave thee.

This is another of Crawford's songs, but I do not think in his happiest manner. What an absurdity, to join such names as *Adonis* and *Mary* together!

—

Corn Rigs are bonnie.

All the old words that I ever could meet to this air were the following, which seem to have been an old chorus.

O corn rigs and rye rigs,
O corn rigs are bonnie;
And where'er you meet a bonnie lass,
Preen up her cockernony.

—

The mucking of Geordie's Byar.

The chorus of this song is old; the rest is the work of Balloon Tytler.

—

Bide ye yet.

There is a beautiful song to this tune, beginning,

" Alas, my son, you little know"—

which is the composition of miss Jenny Graham, of Dumfries.

—

Waukin o' the Fauld.

There are two stanzas still sung to this tune, which I take to be the original song whence Ramsay composed his beautiful song of that name in the Gentle Shepherd. It begins,

O will ye speak at our town,
As ye come frae the fauld, &c.

I regret that, as in many of our old songs, the delicacy of this old fragment is not equal to its wit and humour.

—

Tranent-Muir.

" Tranent-Muir" was composed by a Mr. Skirvan, a very worthy respectable farmer near Haddington. I have heard the anecdote often, that lieut. Smith, whom he mentions in the ninth stanza*, came to Haddington after the publication of the song, and sent a challenge to Skirvan to meet him at Haddington, and answer for the unworthy manner in which he had noticed him in his song. " Gang awa back," said the honest farmer, " and tell Mr. Smith that I hae na leisure to come to Haddington; but tell him to come here; and I'll tak a look o' him, and if I think I'm fit to fecht him, I'll fecht him; and if no—I'll do as he did—*I'll rin awa.*"

—

To the Weavers gin ye go.

The chorus of this song is old, the rest of it is mine. Here, once for all, let me apologize for many silly compositions of mine in this work. Many beautiful airs wanted words; in the hurry of other avocations, if I could string a parcel of rhymes together, any thing near tolerable, I was fain to let them pass. He must be an excellent poet indeed, whose every performance is excellent.

—

Polwarth on the Green.

The author of " Polwarth on the Green," is captain John Drummond M'Grigor, of the family of Bochaldie.

—

Strephon and Lydia.

The following account of this song, I had from Dr. Blacklock.

---

* A corruption of *O hone a rie'*, signifying, " alas, for the prince, or chief."

* *Stanza* 9.

" And major Bowle, that worthy soul,
Was brought down to the ground, man;
His horse being shot, it was his lot
For to get mony a wound, man:
Lieutenant Smith, of Irish birth,
Frae whom he call'd for aid, man,
Being full of dread, lap o'er his head,
And wadna be gainsaid, man!"

The Strephon and Lydia mentioned in the song, were, perhaps, the loveliest couple of their time. The gentleman was commonly known by the name of Beau Gibson. The lady was the "Gentle Jean," celebrated somewhere in Mr. Hamilton of Bangour's poems. Having frequently met at public places, they had formed a reciprocal attachment, which their friends thought dangerous, as their resources were by no means adequate to their tastes and habits of life. To elude the bad consequences of such a connexion, Strephon was sent abroad with a commission, and perished in admiral Vernon's expedition to Carthagena.

The author of the song was William Wallace, esq. of Cairnhill, in Ayrshire.

—

I'm o'er young to marry yet.

The chorus of this song is old.—The rest of it, uch as it is, is mine.

—

M'Pherson's Farewel.*

M'Pherson, a daring robber, in the beginning of this century, was condemned to be hanged at the assizes at Inverness. He is said, when under sentence of death, to have composed this tune, which he called his own lament, or farewel.

Gow has published a variation of this fine tune as his own composition, which he calls, "The Princess Augusta."

—

My Jo, Janet.

Johnson, the publisher, with a foolish delicacy, refused to insert the last stanza of this humorous ballad.

* * * *

—

The Shepherd's Complaint.

The words by a Mr. R. Scott, from the town or neighbourhood of Biggar.

—

The Birks of Aberfeldy.

I composed these stanzas standing under the falls of Aberfeldy, at, or near, Moness.

—

The Highland Lassie, O.

This was a composition of mine in very early life, before I was known at all in the world. My Highland lassie was a warm-hearted, charming young creature, as ever blessed a man with generous love. After a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment, we met by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot by the banks of Ayr, where we spent the day in taking a farewel, before she should embark for the West-Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of autumn following, she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed, when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness*.

—

Fife, and a' the Lands about it.

This song is Dr. Blacklock's. He, as well as I, often gave Johnson verses, trifling enough, perhaps, but they served as a vehicle to the music.

—

Were na my Heart light I wad die.

Lord Hailes, in the notes to his collection of ancient Scots poems, says, that this song was the composition of a lady Grissel Baillie, daughter of the first earl of Marchmont, and wife of George Baillie, of Jerviswood.

—

The Young Man's Dream.

This song is the composition of Balloon Tytler.

* The words are Burns's—they will be found among the poems in this volume.

* There are events in this transitory scene of existence, seasons of joy or of sorrow, of despair or of hope, which, as they powerfully affect us at the time, serve as epochs to the history of our lives. They may be termed the trials of the heart. We treasure them deeply in our memory, and, as time glides silently away, they help us to number our days. Of this character, was the parting of *Burns* with his *Highland Mary*, that interesting female, the first object of the youthful poet's love. This adieu was performed with all those simple and striking ceremonials, which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions and to inspire awe. The lovers stood on each side of a small purling brook; they laved their hands in its limpid stream, and, holding a bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other. They parted—never to meet again!

The anniversary of *Mary Campbell's* death, (for that was her name,) awakening in the sensitive mind of *Burns* the most lively emotions, he retired from his family, then residing on the farm of Ellisland, and wandered, solitary, on the banks of the Nith, and about the farm-yard, in the extremest agitation of mind, nearly the whole of the night: his agitation was so great, that he threw himself on the side of a corn-stack, and there conceived his sublime and tender elegy—his address *to Mary in Heaven*. E.

Strathallan's Lament.

This air is the composition of one of the worthiest and best hearted men living—Allan Masterton, schoolmaster, in Edinburgh. As he and I were both sprouts of jacobitism, we agreed to dedicate the words and air to that cause.

To tell the matter of fact, except when my passions were heated by some accidental cause, my jacobitism was merely by way of *vive la bagatelle.*

—

Up in the Morning early.

The chorus of this is old; the two stanzas are mine.

Up in the morning's no for me,
Up in the morning early;
When a' the hills are cover'd wi' snaw,
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

Cold blaws the wind, frae east to west,
The drift is driving sairly;
Sae loud and shrill's I hear the blast,
I'm sure it's winter fairly.

The birds sit chittering in the thorn,
A' day they fare but sparely;
And lang's the night frae e'en to morn,
I'm sure it's winter fairly.
Up in the morning, &c.

—

The Tears of Scotland.

Dr. Blacklock told me, that Smollett, who was at bottom a great jacobite, composed these beautiful and pathetic verses on the infamous depredations of the duke of Cumberland, after the battle of Culloden.

—

What will I do gin my Hoggie die?

Dr. Walker, who was minister at Moffat, in 1772, and is now (1791) professor of natural history in the university of Edinburgh, told the following anecdote concerning this air. He said that some gentlemen, riding a few years ago through Liddesdale, stopped at a hamlet consisting of a few houses, called Moss Platt; when they were struck with this tune, which an old woman, spinning on a rock at her door, was singing. All she could tell concerning it was, that she was taught it when a child, and it was called, "What will I do gin my Hoggie die." No person, except a few females at Moss Platt, knew this fine old tune; which, in all probability, would have been lost, had not one of the gentlemen, who happened to have a flute with him, taken it down.

I dream'd I lay where Flowers were springing.

These two stanzas I composed when I was seventeen, and are among the oldest of my printed pieces.

I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing,
Gaily in the sunny beam;
List'ning to the wild birds singing,
By a falling, crystal stream:
Straight the sky grew black and daring;
Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with aged arms were warring,
O'er the swelling, drumlie wave.
Such was my life's deceitful morning,
Such the pleasures I enjôy'd;
But lang ere noon, loud tempests storming
A' my flow'ry bliss destroy'd.
Tho' fickle fortune has deceiv'd me,
She promis'd fair, and perform'd but ill;
Of mony a joy and hope bereav'd me,
I bear a heart shall support me still.

—

Ah! the poor Shepherd's mournful Fate.

Tune—Gallashiels.

The old title, "Sour Plums o' Gallashiels," probably was the beginning of a song to this air, which is now lost.

The tune of Gallashiels was composed about the beginning of the present century, by the laird of Gallashiels' piper.

—

The Banks of the Devon.

These verses were composed on a charming girl, a miss Charlotte Hamilton, who is now married to James M'Kitrick Adair, esq. physician. She is sister to my worthy friend, Gavin Hamilton, of Mauchline; and was born on the banks of Ayr, but was, at the time I wrote these lines, residing at Herveyston, in Clackmannanshire, on the romantic banks of the little river Devon. I first heard the air from a lady in Inverness, and got the notes taken down for this work.

—

Mill, Mill O.

The original, or at least a song evidently prior to Ramsay's, is still extant. It runs thus:

Chorus.

The mill, mill O, and the kill, kill O,
And the coggin o' Peggy's wheel O,
The sack and the sieve, and a' she did leave,
And danc'd the miller's reel O.

As I cam down yon waterside,
And by yon shellin-hill O,

There I spied a bonnie, bonnie lass,
And a lass that I lov'd right weel O*.
* * * *

—

We ran and they ran.

The author of "We ran and they ran," was a rev. Mr. Murdoch M'Lennan, minister at Crathie, Deeside.

—

Waly, Waly.

In the west country I have a different edition of the second stanza. Instead of the four lines, beginning with, "When cockle-shells," &c., the other way ran thus:

O, wherefore need I busk my head,
Or, wherefore need I kame my hair,
Sin my faus luve has me forsook,
And says, he'll never luve me mair.

—

Duncan Grey.

Dr. Blacklock informed me, that he had often heard the tradition that this air was composed by a carman in Glasgow.

—

Dumbarton Drums.

This is the last of the West Highland airs; and from it, over the whole tract of country to the confines of Tweed-side, there is hardly a tune or song that one can say has taken its origin from any place or transaction in that part of Scotland. The oldest Ayrshire reel, is Stewarton Lasses, which was made by the father of the present sir Walter Montgomery Cunningham, alias lord Lysle; since which period there has, indeed, been local music in that country in great plenty. Johnie Faa is the only old song which I could ever trace as belonging to the extensive county of Ayr.

—

Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.

This song is by the duke of Gordon. The old verses are,

There's cauld kail† in Aberdeen,
And castocks‡ in Strathbogie;
When ilka lad maun hae his lass,
Then fye, gie me my coggie*.

Chorus.

My coggie, sirs, my coggie, sirs,
I cannot want my coggie:
I wadna gie my three-girr'd cap,
For e'er a quene on Bogie.

There's Johnie Smith has got a wife
That scrimps him o' his coggie,
If she were mine, upon my life
I wad douk her in a bogie.
My coggie, sirs, &c.

—

For Lake of Gold.

The country girls, in Ayrshire, instead of the line—

She me forsook for a great duke,

say,

For Athole's duke she me forsook;

which I take to be the original reading.

These words were composed by the late Dr. Austin, physician, at Edinburgh. He had courted a lady, to whom he was shortly to have been married; but the duke of Athole having seen her, became so much in love with her, that he made proposals of marriage, which were accepted of, and she jilted the doctor.

—

Here's a Health to my true Love, &c.

This song is Dr. Blacklock's. He told me that tradition gives the air to our James IV. of Scotland.

—

Hey tutti tait.

I have met the tradition universally over Scotland, and particularly about Stirling, in the neighbourhood of the scene, that this air was *Robert Bruce's* march at the battle of *Bannockburn*†.

* The remaining two stanzas, though pretty enough, partake rather too much of the rude simplicity of the "olden time" to be admitted here.

† *Kail*, coleworts, a plant much used in Scotland for pottage.

‡ *Castocks*, cabbage-stalks.

* *Cog*, of which coggie is the diminutive, (according to Ramsay,) is a pretty large wooden dish, the country people put their pottage in. It is also a drinking vessel of the same materials, differing from the *bicker* in having no handle.

† It does not seem at all probable that the Scots had any martial music in the time of this monarch; it being their custom, at that period, for every man in the host to bear a little horn, with the blowing of which, as we are told by Froissart, they would make such a horrible noise as if all the devils of hell had been among them. It is not,

Raving Winds around her blowing.

I composed these verses on miss Isabella M'Leod, of Raza, alluding to her feelings on the death of her sister, and the still more melancholy death of her sister's husband, the late earl of Loudon; who shot himself out of sheer heart-break at some mortifications he suffered, owing to the deranged state of his finances.

—

Tak your auld Cloak about ye.

A part of this old song, according to the English set of it, is quoted in Shakspeare*.

—

Ye Gods, was Strephon's Picture blest?

Tune—Fourteenth of October.

The title of this air shows that it alludes to the famous king Crispian, the patron of the honourable corporation of shoemakers. St. Crispian's day falls on the fourteenth of October, old style, as the old proverb tells:

"On the fourteenth of October,
Was ne'er a sutor† sober."

—

Since robb'd of all that charm'd my Views.

The old name of this air is, "The blossom o' the Raspberry." The song is Dr. Blacklock's.

Young Damon.

This air is by Oswald.

—

Kirk wad let me be.

Tradition, in the western part of Scotland, tells that this old song, of which there are still three stanzas extant, once saved a covenanting clergyman out of a scrape. It was a little prior to the revolution, a period when being a Scots covenanter was being a felon, that one of their clergy, who was at that very time hunted by the merciless soldiery, fell in, by accident, with a party of the military. The soldiers were not exactly acquainted with the person of the reverend gentleman of whom they were in search; but, from some suspicious circumstances, they fancied they had got one of that cloth and opprobrious persuasion among them in the person of the stranger. "Mass John," to extricate himself, assumed a freedom of manners, very unlike the gloomy strictness of his sect; and, among other convivial exhibitions, sung, (and some traditions say, composed on the spur of the occasion,) "Kirk wad let me be," with such effect, that the soldiers swore he was a d——d honest fellow, and that it was impossible *he* could belong to those hellish conventicles; and so gave him his liberty.

The first stanza of this song, a little altered, is a favourite kind of dramatic interlude acted at country weddings, in the south-west parts of the kingdom. A young fellow is dressed up like an old beggar; a peruke, commonly made of carded tow, represents hoary locks; an old bonnet; a ragged plaid, or surtout, bound with a straw-rope for a girdle; a pair of old shoes, with straw-ropes twisted round his ancles, as is done by shepherds in snowy weather: his face they disguise as like wretched old age as they can: in this plight he is brought into the wedding-house, frequently to the astonishment of strangers, who are not in the secret, and begins to sing—

"O, I am a silly auld man,
My name it is auld Glenae*, &c.

He is asked to drink, and by and by to dance, which, after some uncouth excuses, he is prevailed on to do, the fiddler playing the tune, which here is commonly called "Auld Glenae;" in short, he is all the time so plied with liquor, that he is understood to get intoxicated, and with all the ridiculous gesticulations of an old drunken beggar, he dances and staggers until he falls on the floor; yet, still in all his riot, nay, in his rolling and tumbling on the floor, with some or other drunken motion of his body, he beats time to the music, till at last he is supposed to be carried out dead drunk.

---

therefore, likely, that these unpolished warriors would be curious

——— "to move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and self recorders."

These horns, indeed, are the only music ever mentioned by Barbour, to whom any particular march would have been too important a circumstance to be passed over in silence; so that it must remain a moot point, whether Bruce's army were cheered by the sound of even a solitary bagpipe.

See *Ritson's Hist. Essay on Scottish Song.*

* In the drinking scene in Othello—Iago sings:

"King Stephen was a worthy peer,
His breeches cost him but a crown;
He held them sixpence all too dear,
With that he called the tailor lown;
He was a wight of high renown,
And thou art but of low degree:
'Tis pride that pulls the country down,
Then take thine auld cloak about thee."

The old song from which these stanzas are taken, was recovered by Dr. Percy, and preserved by him in his *Reliques of Ancient Poetry.* E.

† *Sutor*—a shoemaker.

* Glenae, on the small river Ae, in Annandale; the seat and designation of an ancient branch, and the present representative, of the gallant but unfortunate Dalziels of Carnwath.--This is the *author's* note.

Musing on the roaring Ocean.

I composed these verses out of compliment to a Mrs. M'Lachlan, whose husband is an officer in the East Indies.

—

Blythe was she.

I composed these verses while I stayed at Ochtertyre with sir William Murray. The lady, who was also at Ochtertyre at the same time, was the well-known toast, miss Euphemia Murray of Lentrose, who was called, and very justly, The Flower of Strathmore.

—

Johnny Faa, or the Gypsie Laddie.

The people in Ayrshire begin this song,

" The gypsies cam to my lord Cassili's yett."

They have a great many more stanzas in this song than I ever yet saw in any printed copy. The castle is still remaining at Maybole, where his lordship shut up his wayward spouse, and kept her for life.

—

To daunten me.

The two following old stanzas to this tune have some merit:

To daunton me, to daunton me,
O ken ye what it is that'll daunton me?
There's eighty-eight and eighty-nine,
And a' that I hae borne sinsyne,
There's cess and press* and presbytrie,
I think it will do meikle for to daunton me.
But to wanton me, to wanton me,
O ken ye what it is that wad wanton me?
To see gude corn upon the rigs,
And banishment amang the whigs,
And right restored, where right sud be,
I think it would do meikle for to wanton me.

—

The bonnie Lass made the Bed to me.

" The bonnie Lass made the Bed to me," was composed on an amour of Charles II, when sculking in the north, about Aberdeen, in the time of the usurpation. He formed *une petite affaire* with a daughter of the house of Port-letham, who was the " lass that made the bed to him:"—two verses of it are,

I kiss'd her lips so rosy red,
While the tear stood blinkin in her e'e;
I said, my lassie, dinna cry,
For ye aye shall mak the bed to me.

She took her mither's winding sheet,
And o't she made a sark to me;
Blythe and merry may she be,
The lass that made the bed to me.

—

Absence.

A song in the manner of Shenstone.

This song and air are both by Dr. Blacklock.

—

I had a Horse and I had nae mair.

This story was founded on fact. A John Hunter, ancestor to a very respectable farming family, who live in a place in the parish, I think, of Galston, called Barr-mill, was the luckless hero, that " had a horse and had nae mair." For some little youthful follies, he found it necessary to make a retreat to the West-Highlands, where " he feed himself to a *Highland* laird," for that is the expression of all the oral editions of the song I ever heard. The present Mr. Hunter, who told me the anecdote, is the great-grand-child to our hero.

—

Up and warn a' Willie.

This edition of the song I got from *Tom Niel**, of facetious fame, in Edinburgh. The expression, " Up and warn a' Willie," alludes to the crantara, or warning of a Highland clan to arms. Not understanding this, the Lowlanders, in the west and south, say, " Up and *waur* them a'," &c.

—

A Rose-Bud by my early Walk.

This song I composed on miss Jenny Cruikshank, only child to my worthy friend Mr. Wm. Cruikshank, of the High-School, Edinburgh. The air is by a David Sillar, quondam merchant, and now schoolmaster in Irvine. He is the *Davie* to whom I address my printed poetical epistle in the measure of the Cherry and the Slae.

—

Auld Rob Morris.

It is remark-worthy, that the song of " Hooly and Fairly," in all the old editions of it, is called

* Scot and lot.

* *Tom Niel* was a carpenter in Edinburgh, and lived chiefly by making coffins. He was also precentor, or clerk, in one of the churches. He had a good strong voice, and was greatly distinguished by his powers of mimicry, and his humorous manner of singing the old Scottish ballads. E.

" The Drunken Wife o' Galloway," which localizes it to that country.

—

Rattlin, roarin Willie.

The last stanza of this song is mine; it was composed out of compliment to one of the worthiest fellows in the world, William Dunbar, esq. writer to the signet, Edinburgh, and colonel of the Crochallan corps, a club of wits who took that title at the time of raising the fencible regiments.

—

Where braving angry Winter's Storms.

This song I composed on one of the most accomplished of women, miss Peggy Chalmers that was, now Mrs. Lewis Hay, of Forbes & co.'s bank, Edinburgh.

—

Tibbie, I hae seen the Day.

This song I composed about the age of seventeen.

—

Nancy's Ghost.

This song is by Dr. Blacklock.

—

Tune your Fiddles, &c.

This song was composed by the Rev. John Skinner, nonjuror clergyman at Linshart, near Peterhead. He is likewise the author of Tullochgorum, Ewie wi' the Crooked Horn, John o' Badenyond, &c. and what is of still more consequence, he is one of the worthiest of mankind. He is the author of an ecclesiastical history of Scotland. The air is by Mr. Marshall, butler to the duke of Gordon; the first composer of strathspeys of the age. I have been told by somebody, who had it of Marshall himself, that he took the idea of his three most celebrated pieces The Marquis of Huntley's Reel, His Farewel, and Miss Admiral Gordon's Reel, from the old air, " The German Laddie."

—

Gill Morice.

This plaintive ballad ought to have been called Child Maurice, and not Gill Morice. In its present dress, it has gained immortal honour from Mr. Home's taking it for the ground-work of his fine tragedy of Douglas. But I am of opinion, that the present ballad is a modern composition; perhaps not much above the age of the middle of the last century; at least I should be glad to see or hear of a copy of the present words prior to 1650. That it was taken from an old ballad, called Child Maurice, now lost, I am inclined to believe; but the present one may be classed with Hardycanute*, Kenneth, Duncan, the Laird of Woodhouselie, Lord Livingston, Bin. orie, The Death of Monteith, and many other modern productions, which have been swallowed by many readers, as ancient fragments of old poems. This beautiful plaintive tune was composed by Mr. M'Gibbon, the selector of a collection of Scots tunes. R. R.

In addition to the observations on Gill Morris, I add, that of the songs which capt. Riddel mentions, Kenneth and Duncan are juvenile compositions of Mr. M'Kenzie, the man of feeling. M'Kenzie's father showed them in MS. to Dr. Blacklock, as the productions of his son, from which the doctor rightly prognosticated that the young poet would make, in his more advanced years, a respectable figure in the world of letters.

This I had from Blacklock.

—

Tibbie Dunbar.

This tune is said to be the composition of John M'Gill, fiddler, in Girvan. He called it after his own name.

—

When I upon thy Bosom lean.

This song was the work of a very worthy, facetious old fellow, John Lapraik, late of Dalfram, near Muirkirk; which little property he was obliged to sell, in consequence of some connexion as security for some persons concerned in that villainous bubble, *the Ayr bank.* He has often told me that he composed this song one day when his wife had been fretting over their misfortune†.

---

* In the year 1719, the celebrated poem or ballad of *Hardycanute*, first appeared at Edinburgh, as " a fragment," in a folio pamphlet of twelve pages. *Ritson.*

† This is the very song "*that some kind husband had addrest to some sweet wife,*" alluded to with such exquisite delicacy in the *Epistle to J. Lapraik.*

" There was ae *sang* amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleas'd me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thrill'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,
A' to the life."

—

' When I upon thy bosom lean
And fondly clasp thee a' my ain,
I glory in the sacred ties,
That made us ane, wha anee were twain:
A mutual flame inspires us baith,
The tender look, the melting kiss:
Even years shall ne'er destroy our love,
But only gie us change o' bliss.

' Hae I a wish? it's a' for thee;
I ken thy wish is me to please;

My Harry was a Gallant gay.

Tune—Highlander's Lament.

The oldest title I ever heard to this air was, "The Highland Watch's Farewel to Ireland." The chorus I picked up from an old woman in Dunblane; the rest of the song is mine.

—

The Highland Character.

This tune was the composition of gen. Reid, and called by him, "The Highland, or 42d Regiment's March."

The words are by sir Harry Erskine.

—

Leader Haughs and Yarrow.

There is in several collections, the old song of Leader Haughs and Yarrow. It seems to have been the work of one of our itinerant minstrels, as he calls himself, at the conclusion of his song, "*Minstrel Burn.*"

—

The Tailor fell thro' the Bed, Thimble an' a'.

This air is the march of the corporation of tailors. The second and fourth stanzas are mine.

—

Beware o' bonnie Ann.

I composed this song out of compliment to miss Ann Masterton, the daughter of my friend, Allan Masterton, the author of the air of Strathallan's Lament, and two or three others in this work.

Ye gallants bright, I red ye right,
Beware o' bonnie Ann;
Her comely face sae fu' o' grace,
Your heart she will trepan:
Her een sae bright, like stars by night,
Her skin is like the swan;
Sae jimply lac'd her genty waist,
That sweetly ye might span.

Youth, grace, and love attendant move,
And pleasure leads the van;
In a' their charms, and conquering arms,
They wait on bonnie Ann.
The captive bands may chain the hands,
But love enslaves the man;
Ye gallants braw, I red you a',
Beware o' bonnie Ann.

—

This is no mine ain House.

The first half stanza is old, the rest is Ramsay's. The old words are:

O, this is no mine ain house,
My ain house, my ain house;
This is no mine ain house,
I ken by the biggin o't,

There's bread and cheese are my door-cheeks,
Are my door-cheeks, are my door-cheeks;
There's bread and cheese are my door-cheeks,
And pan-cakes the riggin o't.

This is no my ain wean,
My ain wean, my ain wean;
This is no my ain wean,
I ken by the greetie o't.

I'll tak the curchie aff my head,
Aff my head, aff my head;
I'll tak the curchie aff my head,
And row't about the feetie o't.

The tune is an old Highland air, called *Shuan truish willighan.*

—

Laddie, lie near me.

This song is by Blacklock.

—

The Gardener wi' his Paidle.*

This air is the Gardener's March. The title of the song only is old; the rest is mine.

When rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck her gay, green-spreading bowers;
Then busy, busy are his hours,
The gard'ner wi' his paidle.

The crystal waters gently fa';
The merry birds are lovers a';
The scented breezes round him blaw,
The gard'ner wi' his paidle.

When purple morning starts the hare
To steal upon her early fare;

Our moments pass sae smooth away,
That numbers on us look and gaze,
Weel pleas'd they see our happy days,
Nor envy's sel finds aught to blame;
And aye when weary cares arise,
Thy bosom still shall be my hame.

'I'll lay me there, and take my rest,
And if that aught disturb my dear,
I'll bid her laugh her cares away,
And beg her not to drap a tear:
Hae I a joy? it's a' her ain;
United, still, her heart and mine;
They're like the woodbine round the tree,
That's twin'd till death shall them disjoin.'

* This is the original of the song that appears in p. 111: it is there called *Dainty Davie.*

Then thro' the dews he maun repair,
The gard'ner wi' his paidle.

When day expiring in the west,
The curtain draws of nature's rest;
He flies to her arms he lo'es best,
The gard'ner wi' his paidle.

—

The Day returns, my Bosom burns.

Tune—Seventh of November.

I composed this song out of compliment to one of the happiest and worthiest married couples in the world, Robert Riddel, esq. of Glenriddel, and his lady. At their fire-side I have enjoyed more pleasant evenings than at all the houses of fashionable people in this country put together; and to their kindness and hospitality, I am indebted for many of the happiest hours of my life.

—

The Gaberlunzie-Man.*

The Gaberlunzie-Man is supposed to commemorate an intrigue of James the Vth. Mr. Callander of Craigforth, published, some years ago, an edition of "Christ's Kirk on the Green," and the "Gaberlunzie-Man," with notes critical and historical. James the Vth is said to have been fond of Gosford, in Aberlady parish, and that it was suspected by his contemporaries, that, in his frequent excursions to that part of the country, he had other purposes in view besides golfing and archery. Three favourite ladies, Sandilands, Weir, and Oliphant, (one of them resides at Gosford, and the others in the neighbourhood,) were occasionally visited by their royal and gallant admirer, which gave rise to the following satirical advice to his majesty, from sir David Lindsay, of the Mount, lord lyon†.

Sow not your seed on Sandylands,
Spend not your strength in Weir,
And ride not on an Elephant,
For spoiling o' your gear.

—

My bonnie Mary.

This air is Oswald's; the first half stanza of the song is old, *the rest mine.*

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
An' fill it in a silver tassie;
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonnie lassie;
The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith;
Fu' loud the wind blaws frae the ferry;
The ship rides by the Berwick-law,
And I maun lea'e my bonnie Mary.

The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are ranked ready;
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
The battle closes thick and bloody;
But it's not the roar o' sea or shore
Wad make me langer wish to tarry;
Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar,
It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary*.

—

The black Eagle.

This song is by Dr. Fordyce, whose merits as a prose writer are well known.

—

Jamie come try me.

This air is Oswald's; the song mine.

—

The lazy Mist.

This song is mine.

—

Johnie Cope.

This satirical song was composed to commemorate general Cope's defeat at Preston Pans, in 1745, when he marched against the clans.

The air was the tune of an old song, of which I have heard some verses, but now only remember the title, which was,

Will ye go to the coals in the morning?

—

I love my Jean.

This air is by Marshall; the song I composed out of compliment to Mrs. Burns.

N. B. It was during the honey-moon.

—

Cease, cease, my dear Friend, to explore.

This song is by Dr. Blacklock; I believe, but am not quite certain, that the air is his too.

—

Auld Robin Gray.

This air was formerly called, "The Bridegroom greets when the Sun gangs down."

* A wallet-man or tinker, who appears to have been formerly a jack of all trades.

† Sir David was *lion-king-at-arms*, under James V.

* This song, which Burns here acknowledges to be his own, was first introduced by him in a letter

Donald and Flora.

This is one of those fine Gaelic tunes, preserved from time immemorial in the Hebrides; they seem to be the ground-work of many of our finest Scots pastoral tunes. The words of this song were written to commemorate the unfortunate expedition of general Burgoyne in America, in 1777.

—

O were I on Parnassus' Hill.

This air is Oswald's; the song I made out of compliment to Mrs. Burns.

—

The Captive Ribband.

This air is called Robie donna Gorach.

—

There's a Youth in this City.

This air is claimed by Neil Gow, who calls it his lament for his brother. The first half stanza of the song is old; the rest is mine.

There's a youth in this city, it were a great pity
That he from our lasses should wander awa;
For he's bonnie and braw, weel-favour'd with a',
And his hair has a natural buckle and a'.
His coat is the hue of his bonnet sae blue;
His fecket* is white as the new-driven snaw;
His hose they are blae, and his shoon like the slae,
And his clear siller buckles they dazzle us a'.
His coat is the hue, &c.

For beauty and fortune the laddie's been courtin;
Weel-featur'd, weel-tocher'd, weel-mounted and braw;
But chiefly the siller, *that* gars him gang till her,
The pennie's the jewel that beautifies a'.
There's Meg wi' the mailin, that fain wad a haen him,
And Susy whase dady was laird o' the ha';
There's lang-tocher'd Nancy maist fetters his fancy,
—But the laddie's dear sel he lo'es dearest of a'.

—

My Heart's in the Highlands.

The first half stanza of this song is old; the rest is mine.

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a chasing the deer;
Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highland's wherever I go.

Farewel to the Highlands, farewel to the north,
The birth-place of valour, the country of worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

Farewel to the mountains high cover'd with snow;
Farewel to the straths and green valleys below:
Farewel to the forests and wild-hanging woods;
Farewel to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.
My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands, a chasing the deer:
Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

—

Ca' the Ewes to the Knowes.

This beautiful song is in the true old Scotch taste, yet I do not know that either air or words, were in print before.

—

The Bridal o't.

This song is the work of a Mr. Alexander Ross, late schoolmaster at Lochlee; and author of a beautiful Scots poem, called the Fortunate Shepherdess.

—

Todlen Hame.

This is perhaps the first bottle song that ever was composed.

—

The Braes o' Ballochmyle.

This air is the composition of my friend Allan Masterton, in Edinburgh. I composed the verses on the amiable and excellent family of Whitefoord's leaving Ballochmyle, when sir John's misfortunes had obliged him to sell the estate.

—

The rantin Dog the Daddie o't.

I composed this song pretty early in life, and sent it to a young girl, a very particular acquaintance of mine, who was at that time under a cloud.

O wha my babie-clouts will buy?
Wha will tent me when I cry?
Wha will kiss me whare I lie?
The rantin dog the daddie o't.

Wha will own he did the faut?
Wha will buy my groanin-maut?
Wha will tell me how to ca't?
The rantin dog, the daddie o't.

---

to Mrs. Dunlop, as two *old* stanzas. *See General Correspondence, No.* LX.

* *Fecket*—an under-waistcoat with sleeves.

When I mount the creepie-chair,
Wha will sit beside me there?
Gie me Rob, I seek nae mair,
The rantin dog the daddie o't.

Wha will crack to me my lane?
Wha will mak me fidgin fain*?
Wha will kiss me o'er again?
The rantin dog, the daddie o't.

—

The Shepherd's Preference.

This song is Blacklock's. I don't know how it came by the name, but the oldest appellation of the air was, "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad."

It has little affinity to the tune commonly known by that name.

—

The bonnie Banks of Ayr.

I composed this song as I convoyed my chest so far on the road to Greenock, where I was to embark in a few days for Jamaica.

I meant it as my farewel dirge to my native land†.

—

John o' Badenyond‡.

This excellent song is the composition of my worthy friend, old Skinner, at Linshart.

—

A Waukrife Minnie§.

I picked up this old song and tune from a country girl in Nithsdale. I never met with it elsewhere in Scotland.

Whare are you gaun, my bonnie lass,
Whare are you gaun, my hinnie?
She answer'd me right saucilie,
An errand for my minnie.

O whare live ye, my bonnie lass,
O whare live ye, my hinnie?
By you burn-side, gin ye maun ken,
In a wee house wi' my minnie.

But I foor up the glen at e'en,
To see my bonnie lassie;
And lang before the grey morn cam,
She was na hauf sae saucie.

O weary fa' the waukrife cock,
And the foumart lay his crawin!
He wauken'd the auld wife frae her sleep,
A wee blink or the dawin.

An angry wife I wat she raise,
And o'er the bed she brought her;
And wi' a mickle hazle rung
She made her a weel-pay'd dochter.

O fare thee weel, my bonnie lass!
O fare thee weel, my hinnie!
Thou art a gay and bonnie lass,
But thou hast a waukrife minnie*.

—

Tullochgorum.

This, first of songs, is the master-piece of my old friend Skinner. He was passing the day, at the town of Cullen I think it was, in a friend's house whose name was Montgomery. Mrs. Montgomery observing, *en passant*, that the beautiful reel of Tulluchgorum wanted words, she begged them of Mr. Skinner, who gratified her wishes, and the wishes of every lover of Scottish song, in this most excellent ballad.

These particulars I had from the author's son, bishop Skinner, at Aberdeen.

—

For a' that and a' that.

This song is mine†, all except the chorus.

—

Auld lang Syne.

Ramsay here, as usual with him, has taken the idea of the song, and the first line, from the old fragment, which may be seen in *The Museum*, vol. v.

—

Willie brew'd a Peck o' Maut.

This air is Masterton's; the song mine. The the occasion of it was this: Mr. Wm. Nicol, of the High School, Edinburgh, during the autumn vacation being at Moffat, honest Allan, who was at that time on a visit to Dalswinton, and I went to pay Nicol a visit. We had such a joyous meeting, that Mr. Masterton and I agreed, each in our own way, that we should celebrate the business.

---

* *Fidgin fain*—fidgeting with delight—tickled with pleasure.

† I had taken my last farewel of my few friends; *my chest was on the road to Greenock;* I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia, *The gloomy Night is gathering fast.* See p. 13.

‡ The words of Burns's celebrated dirge—beginning, '*Man was made to mourn*,' were composed to this tune. E.

§ A watchful mother.

* The editor thinks it respectful to the poet to preserve the verses he thus recovered.

† This is part of the *bard's song* in *The Jolly Beggars.*

Killiecrankie.

The battle of Killiecrankie was the last stand made by the clans for James, after his abdication. Here the gallant lord Dundee fell in the moment of victory, and with him fell the hopes of the party. General M'Kay, when he found the Highlanders did not pursue his flying army, said, "Dundee must be killed, or he never would have overlooked this advantage." A great stone marks the place where Dundee fell.

—

The Ewie wi' the crooked Horn.

Another excellent song of old Skinner's.

—

Craigie-burn Wood.

It is remarkable of this air, that it is the confine of that country where the greatest part of our Lowland music, (so far as from the title, words, &c. we can localize it,) has been composed. From Craigie-burn, near Moffat, until one reaches the West Highlands, we have scarcely one slow air of any antiquity.

The song was composed on a passion which a Mr. Gillespie, a particular friend of mine, had for a miss Lorimer, afterwards a Mrs. Whelpdale. The young lady was born at Craigie-burn-wood. The chorus is part of an old foolish ballad.

Beyond thee, dearie, beyond thee, dearie,
And O to be lying beyond thee,
O sweetly, soundly, weel may he sleep,
That's laid in the bed beyond thee.

Sweet closes the evening on Craigie-burn-wood,
And blythely awakens the morrow;
But the pride of the spring in the Craigie-burn-wood,
Can yield to me nothing but sorrow.
Beyond thee, &c.

I see the spreading leaves and flowers,
I hear the wild birds singing;
But pleasure they hae nane for me,
While care my heart is wringing.
Beyond thee, &c.

I canna tell, I maun na tell,
I dare na for your anger;
But secret love will break my heart,
If I conceal it langer.
Beyond thee, &c.

I see thee gracefu', straight, and tall,
I see thee sweet and bonnie,
But oh, what will my torments be,
If thou refuse thy Johnie!
Beyond thee, &c.

To see thee in anither's arms,
In love to lie and languish,
'Twad be my dead, that will be seen,
My heart wad burst wi' anguish.
Beyond thee, &c.

But, Jeanie, say thou wilt be mine,
Say, thou lo'es nane before me;
And a' my days o' life to come
I'll gratefully adore thee.
Beyond thee, &c.

—

Frae the Friends and Land I love.

I added the four last lines by way of giving a turn to the themes of the poem, such as it is.

Frae the friends and land I love,
Driv'n by fortune's felly spite;
Frae my best belov'd I rove,
Never mair to taste delight.
Never mair maun hope to find
Ease frae toil, relief frae care,
When remembrance racks the mind,
Pleasures but unveil despair.

Brightest climes shall mirk appear,
Desart ilka blooming shore;
Till the fates, nae mair severe,
Friendship, love, and peace restore.
Till revenge wi' laurel'd head,
Bring our banish'd hame again;
And ilka loyal, bonnie lad,
Cross the seas and win his ain.

—

Hughie Graham.

There are several editions of this ballad. This, here inserted, is from an oral tradition in Ayrshire, where, when I was a boy, it was a popular song. It, originally, had a simple old tune, which I have forgotten.

Our lords are to the mountains gane,
A hunting o' the fallow deer,
And they have gripet Hughie Graham
For stealing o' the bishop's mare.

And they have tied him hand and foot,
And led him up, thro' Stirling town;
The lads and lasses met him there,
Cried, Hughie Graham, thou'rt a loun.

O lowse my right hand free, he says,
And put my braid sword in the same;
He's no in Stirling town this day,
Dare tell the tale to Hughie Graham.

Up then bespake the brave Whitefoord,
As he sat by the bishop's knee,
Five hundred white stots I'll gie you,
If ye'll let Hughie Graham free.

O haud your tongue, the bishop says,
And wi' your pleading let me be;

For tho' ten Grahams were in his coat,
Hughie Graham this day shall die.

Up then bespake the fair Whitefoord,
As she sat by the bishop's knee;
Five hundred white pence I'll gie you,
If ye'll gie Hughie Graham to me.

O haud your tongue now, lady fair,
And wi' your pleading let it be;
Altho' ten Grahams were in his coat,
It's for my honour he maun die.

They've ta'en him to the gallows knowe,
He looked to the gallows tree,
Yet never colour left his cheek,
Nor ever did he blink his e'e.

At length he looked round about,
To see whatever he could spy:
And there he saw his auld father,
And he was weeping bitterly.

O haud your tongue, my father dear,
And wi' your weeping let it be;
Thy weeping's sairer on my heart,
Than a' that they can do to me.

And ye may gie my brother John
My sword that's bent in the middle clear:
And let him come at twelve o'clock,
And see me pay the bishop's mare.

And ye may gie my brother James
My sword that's bent in the middle brown,
And bid him come at four o'clock,
And see his brother Hugh cut down.

Remember me to Maggy my wife,
The neist time ye gang o'er the moor,
Tell her she staw the bishop's mare,
Tell her she was the bishop's whore.

And ye may tell my kith and kin,
I never did disgrace their blood;
And when they meet the bishop's cloak,
To mak it shorter by the hood*.

* Burns did not *chuse* to be quite correct in stating that this copy of the ballad of *Hughie Graham* is printed from oral tradition in Ayrshire. The fact is, that four of the stanzas are either altered or superadded by himself.

Of this number the third and eighth are original; the ninth and tenth have received his corrections. Perhaps pathos was never more touching, than in the picture of the hero singling out his poor aged father from the crowd of spectators; and the simple grandeur of preparation for this afflicting circumstance, in the verse that immediately precedes it, is matchless.

That the reader may properly appreciate the value of Burns's touches, I here subjoin two verses from the most correct copy of the ballad, as it is printed in the *Border Minstrelsy*, vol. ii. p. 324.

"He looked over his left shoulder,
And for to see what he might see;
There was he aware of his auld father,
Came tearing his hair most piteouslie.

"O hald your tongue, my father, he says,
And see that ye dinna weep for me!
For they may ravish me o' my life,
But they canna banish me from heaven hie!"

* *Tocher*—marriage portion.

A Southland Jenny.

This is a popular Ayrshire song, though the notes were never taken down before. It, as well as many of the ballad tunes in this collection, was written from Mrs. Burns's voice.

—

My Tocher's the Jewel.*

This tune is claimed by Nathaniel Gow. It is notoriously taken from "The Muckin o' Geordie's Byre." It is also to be found, long prior to Nathaniel Gow's æra, in Aird's Selection of Airs and Marches, the first edition, under the name of, "The Highway to Edinburgh."

—

The guid Wife count the Lawin.

The chorus of this is part of an old song, one stanza of which I recollect.

Every day my wife tells me
That ale and brandy will ruin me;
But if gude liquor be my dead,
This shall be written on my head.
O guid wife count, &c.

—

There'll never be Peace till Jamie comes Hame.

This tune is sometimes called, "There's few gude Fellows when Willie's awa." But I never have been able to meet with any thing else of the song than the title.

—

I do confess thou art sae Fair.

This song is altered from a poem by sir Robert Ayton, private secretary to Mary and Ann, queens of Scotland. The poem is to be found in James Watson's collection of Scots poems, the earliest collection printed in Scotland. I think that I have improved the simplicity of the sentiments, by giving them a Scots dress.

I do confess thou art so fair,
I wad been o'er the lugs in luve;
Had I na found the slightest prayer
That lips could speak, thy heart could muve.

I do confess thee sweet, but find
Thou art sae thriftless o' thy sweets,

Thy favours are the silly wind
That kisses ilka thing it meets.

See yonder rose-bud, rich in dew,
Amang its native briers sae coy,
How sune it tines its scent and hue
When pu'd and worn a common toy!

Sic fate e'er lang shall thee betide,
Tho' thou may gaily bloom a while;
Yet sune thou shalt be thrown aside,
Like ony common weed and vile*.

—

The Soldier Laddie.

The first verse of this is old: the rest is by Ramsay.—The tune seems to be the same with a slow air, called "Jacky Hume's Lament"—or, "The Hollin Buss"—or, "Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten."

—

Where wad bonnie Annie lie?

The old name of this tune is;
"Whare 'll our gudeman lie."

A silly old stanza of it runs thus—

O where 'll our gudeman lie,
Gudeman lie, gudeman lie,
O where 'll our gudeman lie,
Till he shute o'er the simmer?

Up amang the hen-bawks,
The hen-bawks, the hen-bawks,
Up amang the hen-bawks,
Amang the rotten timmer.

—

Galloway Tam.

I have seen an interlude (acted at a wedding) to this tune, called "The Wooing of the Maiden." These entertainments are now much worn out in this part of Scotland. Two are still retained in Nithsdale, viz. Jilly Pure Auld Glenae, and this one, The Wooing of the Maiden.

—

As I cam down by yon Castle Wall.

This is a very popular Ayrshire song.

—

Lord Ronald my Son.

This air, a very favourite one in Ayrshire, is evidently the original of Lochaber. In this manner, most of our finest more modern airs have had their origin. Some early minstrel, or musical shepherd, composed the simple artless original air; which being picked up by the more learned musician, took the improved form it bears.

—

O'er the Moor amang the Heather.*

This song is the composition of a Jean Glover, a girl who was not only a whore, but also a thief; and in one or other character has visited most of

---

* The following are the old words of this song:

I do confess thou'rt smooth and fair,
And I might have gone near to love thee;
Had I not found the slightest prayer
That lips could speak, had power to move thee;
But I can let thee now alone,
As worthy to be lov'd by none.

I do confess thou'rt sweet, yet find
Thee such an untbrift of thy sweets,
Thy favours are but like the wind
That kisseth every thing it meets.
And since thou can'st with more than one,
Thou'rt worthy to be kiss'd by none.

The morning rose, that untouch'd stands,
Arm'd with her briars, how sweetly smells!
But pluck'd and strain'd through ruder hands,
Her sweet no longer with her dwells;
But scent and beauty both are gone,
And leaves fall from her, one by one.

Such fate, ere long, will thee betide,
When thou hast handled been awhile!
Like sere-flowers to be thrown aside,
And I shall sigh, while some will smile,
To see thy love to every one
Hath brought thee to be lov'd by none!

This song may be seen in Playford's *Select Ayres*, 1659, folio, under the title of a "Song to a forsaken Mistresse."

It is also printed in Ellis's *Specimens of the early English Poets*, vol. iii, p. 325.

---

* Probably some of my readers will be curious to see this production; I here subjoin it:

Comin thro' the craigs o' Kyle.
Amang the bonnie blooming heather,
There I meet a bonnie lassie,
Keeping of her yowes thegither.

O'er the moor amang the heather,
O'er the moor amang the heather,
There I met a bonnie lassie,
Keeping o' her yowes thegither.

Says I, my dearie where is thy hame,
In moor or dale, pray tell me whether?
She says, I tent the fleecy flocks
That feed amang the blooming heather.
O'er the moor, &c,

We laid us down upon a bank,
Sae warm and sunny was the weather,
She left her flocks at large to rove
Amang the bonnie banks of heather.
O'er the moor, &c.

the correction houses in the west. She was born I believe in Kilmarnock.—I took the song down from her singing, as she was strolling through the country, with a slight-of-hand blackguard.

—

To the Rose Bud.

This song is the composition of a —— Johnson, a joiner in the neighbourhood of Belfast. The tune is by Oswald, altered, evidently, from Jockie's Gray Breeks.

—

Yon wild mossy Mountains.

This tune is by Oswald. The song alludes to part of my private history, which it is of no consequence to the world to know.

Yon wild mossy mountains sae lofty and wide,
That nurse in their bosom the youth o' the Clyde,
Where the grouse lead their coveys thro' the heather to feed,
And the shepherd tents his flock as he pipes on his reed:
Where the grouse, &c.

Not Gowrie's rich valley, nor Forth's sunny shores,
To me hae the charms o' yon wild, mossy moors;
For there, by a lanely and sequester'd stream,
Resides a sweet lassie, my thought and my dream.

Amang the wild mountains shall still be my path,
Ilk stream foaming down its ain green, narrow strath;
For there, wi my lassie, the day lang I rove,
While o'er us, unheeded, flie the swift hours o' love.

She is not the fairest, altho' she is fair;
O' nice education, but sma' is her share;
Her parentage humble as humble can be;
But I lo'e the dear lassie because she lo'es me.*

To beauty what man but maun yield him a prize,
In her armour of glances, and blushes, and sighs;
And when wit and refinement ha'e polished her darts,
They dazzle our een, as they flie to our hearts.

But kindness, sweet kindness, in the fond sparkling e'e,
Has lustre outshining the diamond to me;
And the heart-beating love, as I 'm clasp'd in her arms,
O, these are my lassie's all-conquering charms!

—

It is na, Jean, thy bonnie Face.

These were originally English verses:—I gave them their Scots dress.

—

Eppie M'Nab.

The old song with this title has more wit than decency.

—

Wha is that at my Bower Door?

This tune is also known by the name of, "Lass an I come near thee." The words are mine.

Wha is that at my bower door?
O wha is it but Findlay;
Then gae your gate, ye'se nae be here!
Indeed maun I, quo' Findlay.
What mak ye sae like a thief?
O come and see, quo' Findlay;
Before the morn ye 'll work mischief;
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.

Gif I rise and let you in?
Let me in, quo' Findlay;
Ye 'll keep me waukin wi' your din;
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.
In my bower if ye should stay?
Let me stay, quo' Findlay;
I fear ye 'll bide till break o' day;
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.

Here this night if ye remain,
I 'll remain, quo' Findlay;
I dread ye 'll learn the gate again;
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay;
What may pass within this bower,
Let it pass, quo' Findlay;
Ye maun conceal 'till your last hour;
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay!

—

Thou art gane awa.

This tune is the same with, "Haud awa frae me, Donald."

While thus we lay she sang a sang,
Till echo rang a mile and farther,
And aye the burden o' the sang
Was o'er the moor amang the heather.
O'er the moor, &c.

She charm'd my heart, and aye sinsyne,
I could na think on any ither:
By sea and sky she shall be mine!
The bonnie lass amang the heather.
O'er the moor, &c.

* "I love my love because I know my love loves me."
Maid in Bedlam.

The Tears I shed must ever fall.

This song of genius was composed by a miss Cranston*. It wanted four lines to make all the stanzas suit the music, which I added, and are the four first of the last stanza.

No cold approach, no alter'd mein,
Just what would make suspicion start;
No pause the dire extremes between,
He made me blest—and broke my heart!

—

The bonnie wee Thing.

Composed by my little idol, "The charming, lovely Davies."

—

The tither Morn.

This tune is originally from the Highlands. I have heard a Gaelic song to it, which I was told was very clever, but not by any means a lady's song.

—

A Mother's Lament for the Death of her Son.

This most beautiful tune is, I think, the happiest composition of that bard-born genius, John Riddel, of the family of Glencarnock, at Ayr.—The words were composed to commemorate the much lamented, and premature death of James Ferguson, Esq. jun. of Craigdarroch.

—

Daintie Davie.

This song, tradition says, and the composition itself confirms it, was composed on the Rev. David Williamson's begetting the daughter of lady Cherrytrees with child, while a party of dragoons were searching her house to apprehend him for being an adherent to the solemn league and covenant. The pious woman had put a lady's night-cap on him, and had laid him a-bed with her own daughter, and passed him to the soldiery as a lady, her daughter's bedfellow. A mutilated stanza or two are to be found in Herd's collection, but the original song consists of five or six stanzas, and were their *delicacy* equal to their *wit* and *humour*, they would merit a place in any collection. The first stanza is,—

Being pursued by the dragoons,
Within my bed he was laid down;
And weel I wat he was worth his room,
For he was my daintie Davie.

Ramsay's song, Luckie Nansie, though he calls it an old song with additions, seems to be all his own, except the chorus:

I was a telling you,
Luckie Nansie, luckie Nansie,
Auld springs wad ding the new,
But ye wad never trow me.

Which I should conjecture to be part of a song, prior to the affair of Williamson.

—

Bob o' Dumblane.

Ramsay, as usual, has modernized this song. The original, which I learned on the spot from my old hostess in the principal inn there, is:

Lassie, lend me your braw hemp heckle,
And I 'll lend you my thripplin-kame;
My heckle is broken, it cannot be gotten,
And we 'll gae dance the bob o' Dumblane.

Twa gaed to the wood, to the wood, to the wood,
Twa gaed to the wood—three came hame;
An' it be na weel bobbit, weel bobbit, weel bobbit,
An' it be na weel bobbit, we 'll bob it again.

I insert this song to introduce the following anecdote, which I have herd well authenticated. In the evening of the day of the battle of Dumblane* (Sheriff-Muir), when the action was over, a Scots officer in Argyle's army, observed to his grace, that he was afraid the rebels would give out to the world that *they* had gotten the victory. 'Weel, weel," returned his grace, alluding to the foregoing ballad, "if they think it be nae weel bobbit, we 'll bob it again."

Note referred to in page 394.

A short Account of James Tytler.

JAMES TYTLER was the son of a country clergyman, in the presbytery of Brechin, and brother to Dr. Tytler, the translator of Callimachus. He was instructed by his father in classical learning and school divinity, and attained an accurate knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, and an extensive acquaintance with biblical literature and scholastic theology. Having discovered an early predilection for the medical profession, he was put apprentice to a surgeon in Forfar, and afterwards sent to attend the medical classes at Edinburgh. While a medical student he cultivated experimental chemistry and controversial theology with equal assiduity. Unfortunately his religious opinions, not deemed orthodox, or calvinistical, connected him with a society of Glassites, and involved him in a marriage with a member of the

* This lady is now married to professor Dugald Stewart.

* The battle of Dumblane, or Sheriff-Muir, was fought the 13th of November, 1715, between the the earl of Mar, for the chevalier, and the duke of Argyle, for the government. Both sides claimed the victory, the left wing of either army being routed. Ritson observes, it is very remarkable that the capture of Preston happened on the same day.

society, which terminated in a separation. He now settled at Leith, as an apothecary, depending on the patronage of his religious connections; but his separation from the society, which happened soon after, with an unsteadiness that was natural to him, disappointed his expectations. When he ceased to be a Glassite, he ceased not to be a firm believer in the Christian revelation, and a zealous advocate of genuine Christianity; but he never afterwards held communion with any denomination of Christians. The neglect of his business was the unavoidable consequence of his attention to religious dissentions; and having contracted debts to a considerable amount, he was obliged to remove to Berwick, and afterwards to Newcastle. In both places he was employed in preparing chemical medicines for the druggists; but the liberality of his employers being insufficient to preserve an encreasing family from the evils of penury, he returned to Edinburgh, in the year 1772, in extreme poverty, and took refuge from the molestation of his creditors within the precincts of the sanctuary of Holyrood House, where debtors are privileged from arrests. At this period his wife deserted him and their five children, the youngest only six months old, and returned to her relations. He solaced himself, for the privation of domestic happiness, by composing a humorous ballad entitled "*The Pleasures of the Abbey*," which was his first attempt in poetry. In a description of its inhabitants, the author himself is introduced in the 16th and 17th stanzas. In the avocation of an author by profession, which he was now compelled to assume, he displayed a versatility of talent and a facility in writing, unexampled in the transactions of the press. He commenced his literary career by a publication entitled "*Essays on the most important Subjects of natural and revealed Religion*," which issued from the asylum for debtors, under the peculiar circumstances of being composed by himself, at the printing case, from his own conceptions, without a manuscript before him, and wrought off at a press of his own construction, by his own hands. He left this singular work, which was to be completed in two volumes 8vo. unfinished, and turned aside, to attack the opinions of a new religious sect called Bereans, in a *Letter to Mr. John Barclay onthe Doctrine of Assurance*, in which he again performed the functions of author, compositor, and pressman. He next set forth, with such assistance as he could find, a monthly publication, entitled *The Gentleman and Lady's Magazine*, which was soon abandoned for *The Weekly Review*, a literary miscellany, which, in its turn, was discontinued in a very short time. These publications, unavoidably disfigured with many typographical deformities, made him known to the booksellers; and from them he afterwards found constant employment in compilations, abridgments, translations, and miscellaneous essays. He now ventured to leave the miserable apartments which he had long occupied in the sanctuary for debtors, for more comfortable lodgings, first at Restalrig, and afterwards in the city, and if his prudence and steadiness had been equal to his talents and industry, he might have earned by his labours a complete maintenance, which never fell to his lot. As he wrote for subsistence, not from the vanity of authorship, he was engaged in many works which were anonymous, and in others which appeared with the names of his employers. He is editor or author of the following works: *The Weekly Mirror*, a periodical publication which began in 1780. *A System of Geography*, in 8vo. *A History of Edinburgh*, 12mo. *A Geographical, Historical, and Commercial Grammar*, 2 vols. 8vo. *A Review of Dritchken's Theory of Inflammation*, 12mo. with a practical dedication. *Remarks on Mr. Pinkerton's Introduction to the History of Scotland*, 8vo. *A poetical Translation of Virgil's Eclogues*, 4to. *A general Index to the Scots Magazine*. *A System of Chemistry*, written at the expense of a gentleman who was to put his name to it, unpublished. He gave his assistance in preparing the System of Anatomy published by A. Bell, and was an occasional contributor to the *Medical Commentaries*, and other periodical publications of the times. He was the principal editor of the second edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and finished, with incredible labour, a large proportion of the more considerable scientific treatises and histories, and almost all the minor articles. He had an apartment assigned him in the printing-house, where he performed the offices of compiler, and corrector of the press, at a salary of *sixteen shillings a week!* When the third edition was undertaken, he was engaged as a stated contributor, upon more liberal terms, and wrote a larger share in the early volumes than is ascribed to him in the general preface. It was his misfortune to be continually drawn aside from the business of his employers by the delight he took in prosecuting experiments in chemistry, electricity, and mechanics, which consumed a large portion of his time and money. He conducted for some time, with success, a manufacturing process of which he was the inventor; but after he had disclosed his secret to the gentlemen at whose expence it was carried on, he was dismissed, without obtaining either a share in the business, or a suitable compensation for his services. He was the first in Scotland who adventured in a fire balloon, constructed upon the plan of Montgolfier. He ascended from *Comely Garden*, Edinburgh, amidst the acclamations of an immense multitude, and descended at a distance of a quarter of a mile, owing to some unforeseen defect in the machinery. The failure of this adventure deprived him of the public favour and applause, and encreased his pecuniary difficulties. He again had recourse to his pen for subsistence, and amidst the drudgery of writing, and the cares which pressed upon him daily, he exhilarated his spirits, at intervals, with a tune on the Irish bagpipe, which he played with much sweetness, interposing occasionally a song of his own composition, sung with great animation. A solace of this kind was well suited to the simplicity of his manners, the modesty of his disposition, and the integrity of his character, such as they were before he suffered his social propensities to violate the rules of sobriety. Forgetting his old friends, he associated with discontented persons, and entered into a deliberate exposition of the abuses of government, in "*A Pamphlet on the Excise*," and more systematically in a periodical publication, entitled *The Historical Register*, which gratified malignity by per-

sonal invective and intemperance of language. He was concerned in the wild irrational plans of the British Convention, and published "*A Hand Bill addressed to the People*," written in so inflamatory a style, as rendered him obnoxious to government. A warrant was issued to apprehend him, and he left his native country and crossed the Atlantic for America, where he fixed his residence in the town of Salem, in the state of Massachusetts, where he established a newspaper in connexion with a printer, which he continued till his death, which happened in the year 1805, in the 58th year of his age.

The editor cannot dismiss this note without acknowledging himself greatly obliged by the communications of Dr. Robert Anderson, of Edinburgh.

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" In the changes of language, these songs may no doubt suffer change; but the associated strain of sentiment and of music will perhaps survive, while the clear stream sweeps down the *Vale of Yarrow*, or the yellow broom waves on the *Cowden Knowes*."

Dr. CURRIE.

COMMON PLACE BOOK,

JOURNALS,

FRAGMENTS OF LETTERS,

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS,

&c. &c.

ROBERT BURNS'S

COMMON PLACE, OR SCRAP BOOK,

BEGUN IN APRIL, 1783*.

" *Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry &c.* by *Robert Burness;* a man who had little art, in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature, rational and irrational. As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really *his own*, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature, to see how a plough-man thinks, and feels, under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the *modes* and *manners* of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, on all the species.

" There are numbers in the world who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities, to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print."

Shenstone.

" Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil or our pen designed!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind."

Ibid.

April, 1783.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young inexperienced mind into; still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

August.

There is certainly some connection between love, and music, and poetry; and therefore, I have always thought it a fine touch of nature, that passage in a modern love composition,

" As tow'rds her cot he jogg'd along,
Her name was frequent in his song."

For my own part, I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I got once heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity; unacquainted and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly; but I am always pleased with it, as it recals to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest, and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl, who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of her then—but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the enchantment at an end.

Tune—I am a man unmarried.

O once I lov'd a bonnie lass,
Ay, and I love her still,
And whilst that honour warms my breast
I 'll love my handsome Nell.
Fal lal de ral, &c.

As bonnie lassies I have seen,
And mony full as braw,
But for a modest gracefu' mein
The like I never saw.

A bonnie lass, I will confess,
Is pleasant to the e'e,

* It has been the chief object in making this collection, not to omit any thing which might illustrate the character and feelings of the bard at different periods of his life. Hence these " *Observations*" are given entire from his manuscript. A small portion appears in Dr. Currie's edition, but the reader will pardon the repetition of it here when he considers how much so valuable a paper would lose by being given in fragments, and when he recollects that this volume may fall into the hands of those who have not the opportunity of referring to the large edition of the works.

This remark will apply equally to the *Journals* and other pieces, of which parts have before been published. E.

But without some better qualities
She 's no a lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,
And what is best of a',
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.

She dresses aye sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel:
And then there 's something in her gait
Gars ony dress look weel.

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart,
But it 's innocence and modesty
That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without controul.
Fal lal de ral, &c.

Criticism on the or egoing Song.

Lest my works should be thought below criticism; or meet with a critic who, perhaps, will not look on them with so candid and favourable an eye; I am determined to criticise them myself.

The first distich of the first stanza, is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and, on the other hand, the second distich is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little aukward, and the sentiments too serious. Stanza the second, I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the sex—the agreeables; or what in our Scotch dialect we call a *sweet sonsy lass*. The third stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it; and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second stanza, but the rest is mostly expletive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my favourite idea—a *sweet sonsy lass:* the last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth stanza; but the second and fourth lines, ending with short syllables, hurt the whole. The seventh stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it, but my heart melts, my blood sallies at the remembrance.

September,

I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher, Mr. Smith, in his excellent *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand: but when our own follies, or crimes, have made us miserable and wretched, to bear up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct, is a glorious effort of self-command.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace,
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish,
Beyond comparison the worst are those
That to our folly or our guilt we owe.
In every other circumstance, the mind
Has this to say—"It was no deed of mine;"
But when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added—"Blame thy foolish self!"
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse;
The torturing, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involved others;
The young, the innocent, who fondly lov'd us,
Nay, more, that very love their cause of ruin!
O burning hell! in all thy store of torments,
There's not a keener lash!
Lives there a man so firm, who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of this crime,
Can reason down its agonizing throbs;
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace?
O. happy! happy! enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

March, 1784.

I have often observed, in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him; though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution, inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason, no man can say in what degree any other person, besides himself, can be, with strict justice, called *wicked*. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially, how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation; and what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest, how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all: I say, any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.

I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind, commonly known by the ordinary phrase of *blackguards*, sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character; those who, by thoughtless prodigality or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin. Though disgraced by follies, nay sometimes "stained with guilt, * * * * * * * *," I have yet found among them, in not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty.

April.

As I am what the men of the world, if they knew such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment, which are, in a manner, *peculiar* to myself, or some here and there such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of the winter, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes, giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the

" Mighty tempest, and the hoary waste
Abrupt and deep, stretch'd o'er the buried earth,"

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to *Him*, who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, " walks on the wings of the wind." In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed the following:

The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
An' roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.

" The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast*,"
The joyless winter-day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it sooths my soul,
My griefs it seems to join,
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

Thou *Pow'r Supreme*, whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they must be blest,
Because they are *Thy* will!
Then all I want (O, do thou grant
This one request of mine!)
Since to *enjoy* thou dost deny,
Assist me to *resign*.

Shenstone finely observes, that love-verses, writ without any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love-composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe to love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill, in distinguishing foppery and conceit, from real passion and nature. Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is my own; only I can say it was, at the time, genuine from the heart.

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wint'ry sun the day has clos'd,
And I'll awa to Nannie, O.

The weslin wind blaws loud an' shrill;
The night's baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I'll get my plaid an' out I'll steal,
An' owre the hills to Nannie, O.

My Nannie 's charming, sweet, an' young;
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nannie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonnie, O:
The op'ning gowan, wet wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be!
I'm welcome to my Nannie, O.

My riches a's my penny-fee,
An' I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a' my Nannie, O.

Our auld guidman delights to view
His sheep an' kye thrive bonnie, O;
But I'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh,
An' has nae care but Nannie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I'll tak what Heav'n will sen' me, O.
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nannie, O.

March, 1784.

There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened, and indeed effected, the utter ruin of my fortune. My body too was attacked by the most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria, or confirmed melancholy. In this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following—

O *Thou* Great Being! what thou art
Surpasses me to know;
Yet sure I am, that known to thee
Are all thy works below.

* Dr. Young.

Thy creature here before thee stands,
All wretched and distrest;
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
Obey thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act
From cruelty or wrath;
O, free my weary eyes from tears,
Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves
To bear and not repine!

April.

The following song is a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification, but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over.

SONG.

Tune—The Weaver and his Shuttle, O.

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, O,
And carefully he bred me in deceney and order, O;
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a farthing, O,
For without an honest manly heart, no man was worth regarding, O.

Then out into the world my course I did determine, O,
Tho' to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was charming, O;
My talents they were not the worst; nor yet my education, O:
Resolv'd was I, at least to try, to mend my situation, O.

In many a way, and vain essay, I courted fortune's favour, O;
Some cause unseen, still stept between, to frustrate each endeavour, O;
Sometimes by foes I was o'erpower'd; sometimes by friends forsaken, O;
And when my hope was at the top, I still was worst mistaken, O.

Then sore harass'd, and tir'd at last, with fortune's vain delusion, O,
I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams, and came to this conclusion, O:
The past was bad, and the future hid; it's good or ill untryed, O;
But the present hour was in my pow'r, and so I would enjoy it, O.

No help, nor hope, nor view had I; nor person to befriend me, O;
So I must toil, and sweat, and broil, and labour to sustain me, O:
To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me early, O;
For one, he said, to labour bred, was a match for fortune fairly, O.

Thus all obscure, unknown, and poor, thro' life I'm doom'd to wander, O,
Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber, O;
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain or sorrow, O;
I live to day, as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow, O.

But, cheerful still, I am as well as a monarch in a palace, O;
Tho' fortune's frown still hunts me down, with all her wonted malice, O;
I make, indeed, my daily bread, but ne'er can make it farther, O;
But as daily bread is all I need, I do not much regard her, O.

When sometimes by my labour, I earn a little money, O,
Some unforeseen misfortune comes generally upon me, O;
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect, or my good-natur'd folly, O;
But come what will, I've sworn it still, I'll ne'er be melancholy, O.

All you who follow wealth and power with unremitting ardour, O,
The more in this you look for bliss, you leave your view the farther, O;
Had you the wealth Potosi boasts, or nations to adore you, O,
A cheerful honest-hearted clown I will prefer before you, O.

April.

I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided into two grand classes, which I shall call the *grave* and the *merry*; though, by the bye, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. The grave I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money, and those whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The merry are the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action; but, without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent—in particular *he*, who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life—generally, indeed, in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him, who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others; and lastly, to grace the quorum, such are, generally, those whose heads are capable of all the towerings of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with all the delicacy of feeling.

August.

The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men; but as I cannot please myself in the arrangement of my ideas, I must wait till farther experience and nicer observation, throw more light on the subject. In the mean time I shall set down the following fragment, which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable any body to determine which of the classes I belong to.

Green grow the rashes, O,
Green grow the rashes, O,
The sweetest hours that e'er I spent,
Were spent amang the lasses, O.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O;
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O.

The warly race may riches chace,
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.

But gie me a canny hour at e'en,
My arms about my dearie, O;
An' warly cares, an' warly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie, O!

For you sae douse, ye sneer at this,
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O;
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O!

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O;
Her prentice han' she try'd on man!
An' then she made the lasses, O!
Green grow the rashes, O, &c.

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that *Being* to whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that renders life delightful; and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow-creatures; that so, by forming piety and virtue into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the pious, and the good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave—I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of such a one as the above verses describe—one who spends the hours and thoughts which the vocations of the day can spare, with Ossian, Shakspeare, Thomson, Shenstone, Sterne, &c. or, as the maggot takes him, a gun, a fiddle, or a song to make or mend; and at all times some heart's-dear bonnie lass in view—I say I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of such a one, are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of piety and virtue, than the, even lawful, bustling and straining after the world's riches and honours: and I do not see but he may gain heaven as well, which, by the bye, is no mean consideration, who steals through the vale of life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way; as he, who, straining straight forward, and perhaps spattering all about him, gains some of life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see and be seen a little more conspicuously, than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term the poor, indolent devil he has left behind him.

August.

A prayer, when fainting fits, and other alarming symptoms of pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threatens me, first put nature on the alarm.

O *Thou* unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun;
As *something*, loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done;

Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Where human *weakness* has come short,
Or *frailty* stept aside,
Do thou *All Good!* for such thou art,
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd,
No other plea I have,
But, *Thou art good;* and goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

August.

Misgivings in the hour of *despondency* and prospect of death.

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy, with draughts of ill between,
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms.
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry *God*,
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might desert fair virtue's way;
Again in folly's path might go astray:
Again exult the brute and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation ran?

O Thou, great governor of all below!
If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
Or still the tumult of the raging sea;
With that controuling pow'r assist ev'n me,
Those headlong furious passions to confine;
For all unfit I feel my powers to be,
To rule their torrent in th' allowed line,
O, aid me with thy help, *Omnipotence Divine!*

Egotisms *from my own Sensations.*

May.

I don't well know what is the reason of it, but some how or other though I am, when I have a mind, pretty generally beloved; yet, I never could get the art of commanding respect*.—I imagine it is owing to my being deficient in what Sterne calls "that understrapping virtue of discretion." I am so apt to a *lapsus linguæ*, that I sometimes think the character of a certain great man, I have read of somewhere, is very much *apropos* to myself—that he was a compound of great talents and great folly. N. B. To try if I can discover the causes of this wretched infirmity, and, if possible, to amend it.

SONG.

Tho' cruel fate should bid us part,
As far's the pole and line;
Her dear idea round my heart
Should tenderly entwine.

Tho' mountains frown and desarts howl,
And oceans roar between;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
I still would love my Jean.

FRAGMENT.

Tune—John Anderson, my jo.

One night as I did wander,
When corn begins to shoot,
I sat me down to ponder,
Upon an auld tree root:
Auld Aire ran by before me,
And bicker'd to the seas;
A cushat* crouded o'er me
That echoed thro' the braes.

FRAGMENT.

Tune—Daintie Davie.

There was a lad was born in Kyle†,
But what na day o' what na style
I doubt it's hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi' *Robin.*

Robin was a rovin' boy,
Rantin' rovin', rantin' rovin';
Robin was a rovin' boy,
Rantin' rovin' Robin.

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane
Was five-and-twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar win'
Blew hansel in on *Robin.*

The gossip keekit in his loof,
Quo' scho wha lives will see the proof,
This waly boy will be nae coof,
I think we'll ca' him *Robin.*

He'll hae misfortunes great and sma',
But aye a heart aboon them a';
He'll be a credit 'till us a',
We'll a' be proud o' *Robin.*

But sure as three times three mak nine,
I see by ilka score and line,
This chap will dearly like our kin',
So leeze me on thee, *Robin.*

Guid faith quo' scho, I doubt you, sir,
Ye gar the lasses * * * *
But twenty fauts ye may hae waur,
So blessins on thee, *Robin!*

Robin was a rovin' boy,
Rantin' rovin', rantin' rovin;
Robin was a rovin' boy,
Rantin' rovin' Robin.

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* There is no doubt that if Burns at any time really laboured under this infirmity, he was successful in inquiring into its causes, and also in his efforts to amend it. When he was, at a later period of life, introduced into the superior circles of society, he did not appear then as a cypher, nor did he, by any violation of the dictates of common sense, give any occasion, even to those who were superciliously disposed to look upon him with contempt. On the contrary, he was conscious of his own moral and intellectual worth, and never abated an inch of his just claims to due consideration. The following extract of a letter from his great and good biographer, who was an excellent judge of human character, bears an honourable testimony to the habitual firmness, decision, and independence of his mind, which constitute the only solid basis of respectability.

"Burns was a very singular man in the strength and variety of his faculties.—I saw him, and once only, in the year 1792. We conversed together for about an hour in the street of Dumfries, and engaged in some very animated conversation.—We differed in our sentiments sufficiently to be rather vehemently engaged—and this interview gave me a more lively, as well as forcible impression of his talents, than any part of his writings. He was a great *orator*,—an original and very versatile genius."

3*d October*, 1799.

* The dove, or wild pigeon.

† *Kyle*—a district of Ayrshire.

ELEGY

On the Death of Robert Ruisseaux.*

Now Robin lies in his last lair,
He'll gabble rhyme, nor sing nae mair,
Cauld poverty, wi' hungry stare,
Nae mair shall fear him;
Nor anxious fear, nor cankert care
E'er mair come near him.

To tell the truth, they seldom fash't him,
Except the moment that they crush't him;
For sune as chance or fate had husht 'em,
Tho' e'er sae short,
Then wi' a rhyme or song he lash't 'em,
And thought it sport.

Tho' he was bred to kintra wark,
And counted was baith wight and stark,
Yet that was never Robin's mark
To mak a man;
But tell him, he was learn'd and clark,
Ye roos'd him then†!

though no young poet, nor young soldier's heart,
ever beat more fondly for fame than mine—

And if there is no other scene of being
Where my insatiate wish may have its fill;—
This something at my heart that heaves for room,
My best, my dearest part was made in vain.

Aug.

A FRAGMENT.

Tune—I had a horse and I had nae mair.

When first I came to Stewart Kyle,
My mind it was nae steady,
Where'er I gaed, where'er I rade,
A mistress still I had aye:

But when I came roun' by Mauchline town,
Not dreadin' any body,
My heart was caught before I thought,
And by a Mauchline lady.

August.

However I am pleased with the works of our Scots poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Fergusson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c. immortalized in such celebrated performances, while my dear native country, the ancient bailieries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous both in ancient and modern times for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants; a country where civil and particularly religious liberty have ever found their first support, and their last asylum; a country, the birth-place of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish history, particularly a great many of the actions of the glorious *Wallace*, the *saviour* of his country; yet, we never have had one Scotch poet of any eminence, to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes on Aire, and the healthy mountainous source, and winding sweep of *Doon*, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, Tweed, &c. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but, alas! I am far unequal to the task, both in native genius and education‡. Obscure I am, and obscure I must be,

* *Ruisseaux*—a play on his own name.

† *Ye roos'd*—ye prais'd.

‡ This kind of feeling appears to have animated the poet's bosom at a very early period of his life. In a poetical epistle addressed to "Mrs. Scott, of Wauchope house," dated March, 1787, he alludes to the sensations of his early days in the following tender strain of sentiment.

GUIDWIFE.

I mind it weel, in early date,
When I was beardless, young, and blate,
An' first could thresh the barn,
Or haud a yokin at the pleugh,
An' tho' fu' foughten sair eneugh,
Yet unco proud to learn.

Ev'n then a wish (I mind its power),
A wish, that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast;
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or beuk could make,
Or sing a song at least.

The rough bur-thistle spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turned my weeding heuk aside,
An' spar'd the symbol dear.
* * * *

Sept.

There is a great irregularity in the old Scotch songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously, with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of *The Mill, Mill, O*, to give it a plain prosaic reading, it halts prodigiously out of measure: on the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's collection of Scotch songs, which begins "*To Fanny fair could I impart, &c.*" it is most exact measure, and yet, let them both be sung before a real critic, one above the biasses of prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature,—how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite, and lamely methodical, compared with the wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first!—This is particularly the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables,

and yet, very frequently, nothing, not even *like* rhyme or sameness of jingle at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that, perhaps, it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs, particularly that class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether.

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect, that such glorious old bards—bards who, very probably, owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love, with such fine strokes of nature—that their very names (O, how mortifying to a bard's vanity!) are now "buried among the wreck of things which were."

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well; the last, the meanest of the muses' train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love: *he* too has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his muse: she taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse. May the turf lie lightly on your bones! and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

Sept.

The following fragment is done* something in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scotch piece called M'Millan's Peggy, and sings to the tune of Galla Water. My Montgomerie's Peggy was my deity for six or eight months. She had been bred (though, as the world says, without any just pretence for it) in a style of life rather elegant—but as Vanbrugh says in one of his comedies, "My d——d star found me out" there too; for though I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or, to tell the truth, which will scarcely be believed, a vanity of showing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux*, which I always piqued myself upon, made me lay siege to her; and when, as I always do in my foolish gallantries, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me, one day, in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been some time before the rightful property of another; but, with the greatest friendship and politeness, she offered me every alliance except actual possession. I found out afterwards that what she told me of a pre-engagement was true; but it cost me some heart-achs to get rid of the affair.

I have even tried to imitate in this extempore thing, the irregularity of the rhyme, which, when judiciously done, has such a fine effect on the ear.

FRAGMENT.

Tune—Gallawater.

Altho' my bed were in yon muir,
Amang the heather, in my plaidie,
Yet happy, happy would I be,
Had I my dear Montgomerie's Peggy.

When o'er the hill beat surly storms,
And winter nights were dark and rainy;
I'd seek some dell, and in my arms
I'd shelter dear Montgomerie's Peggy.

Were I a baron proud and high,
And horse and servants waiting ready,
Then a' 'twad gie o' joy to me,
The sharin't with Montgomerie's Peggy.

September.

There is another fragment in imitation of an old Scotch song, well known among the country ingle sides.—I cannot tell the name, neither of the song or the tune, but they are in fine unison with one another. By the way, these old Scottish songs are so nobly sentimental, that when one would compose them, to *south the tune*, as our Scotch phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration, and raise the bard into that glorious enthusiasm, so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry. I shall here set down one verse of the piece mentioned above, both to mark the song and tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times.

"When clouds in skies do come together
To hide the brightness of the sun,
There will surely be some pleasant weather
When a' their storms are past and gone*."

Though fickle fortune has deceiv'd me,
She promis'd fair and perform'd but ill;
Of mistress, friends, and wealth bereav'd me,
Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.

I'll act with prudence as far's I'm able,
But if success I must never find,
Then come, misfortune, I bid thee welcome,
I'll meet thee with an undaunted mind.

The above was an extempore, under the pressure of a heavy train of misfortunes, which, indeed, threatened to undo me altogether. It was

* This passage explains the love-letters to Peggy.

* Alluding to the misfortunes he feelingly laments before this verse. (*This is the author's note.*)

just at the close of that dreadful period mentioned page vii*; and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there has always been since a tempest brewing round me in the grim sky of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will some time or other, perhaps ere long, overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell, to pine in solitary, squalid wretchedness.—However, as I hope my poor country muse, who, all rustic, awkward, and unpolished as she is, has more charms for me than any other of the pleasures of life beside—as I hope she will not then desert me, I may, even then, learn to be, if not happy, at least easy, and *south a sang* to sooth my misery.

'Twas at the same time I set about composing an air in the old Scotch style.—I am not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, and perhaps 'tis no great matter, but the following were the verses I composed to suit it:

O raging fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low! O
O raging fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low! O
My stem was fair, my bud was green,
My blossom sweet did blow; O
The dew fell fresh, the sun rose mild,
And made my branches grow; O
But luckless fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low, O
But luckless fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low, O

The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole air.

October, 1785.

If ever any young man, in the vestibule of the world, chance to throw his eyes over these pages, let him pay a warm attention to the following observations; as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil's dear-bought experience.—I have, literally, like that great poet and great gallant, and, by consequence, that great fool, Solomon,—"turned my eyes to behold madness and folly."—Nay, I have, with all the ardour of a lively, fanciful, and whimsical imagination, accompanied with a warm, feeling, poetic heart—shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.

In the first place, let my pupil, as he tenders his own peace, keep up a regular, warm intercourse with the Deity. * * * * * * * * * * *

(Here the MSS. abruptly close.)

* Of the original MS. see the remark, March, 1784, beginning, "*There was a certain period*," &c.

FRAGMENTS,

MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS, &c.

"Every single observation that is published by a man of genius, be it ever so trivial, should be esteemed of importance; because he speaks from his own impressions: whereas common men publish common things, which they have perhaps gleaned from frivolous writers."

Shenstone.

I LIKE to have quotations for every occasion: they give one's ideas so pat, and save one the trouble of finding expressions adequate to one's feelings. I think it is one of the greatest pleasures attending a poetic genius, that we can give our woes, cares, joys, loves, &c. an embodied form in verse; which, to me, is ever immediate ease. Goldsmith says finely of his muse—

"Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe;
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so."

—

What a creature is man! A little alarm last night, and to-day, that I am mortal, has made such a revolution on my spirits! There is no philosophy, no divinity, that comes half so much home to the mind. I have no idea of courage that braves Heaven: 'tis the wild raving of an imaginary hero in bedlam.

—

My favourite feature in Milton's Satan is, his manly fortitude in supporting what cannot be remedied—in short, the wild, broken fragments of a noble, exalted mind in ruins. I meant no more by saying he was a favourite hero of mine.

—

I am just risen from a two-hours bout after supper, with silly or sordid souls, who could relish nothing in common with me—but the port. "One." 'Tis now "witching time of night;" and whatever is out of joint in the foregoing scrawl, impute it to enchantments and spells; for I can't look over it, but will seal it up directly, as I don't care for to-morrow's criticisms on it.

—

We ought, when we wish to be economists in happiness; we ought, in the first place, to fix the standard of our own character; and when, on full examination, we know where we stand, and how much ground we occupy, let us contend for it as property; and those who seem to doubt, or deny us what is justly ours, let us either pity their prejudices, or despise their judgment.

I know you will say this is self-conceit; but I call it self-knowledge: the one is the overweening opinion of a fool, who fancies himself to be, what he wishes himself to be thought; the other is the honest justice that a man of sense, who has thoroughly examined the subject, owes to himself. Without this standard, this column, in our mind, we are perpetually at the mercy of the petulance, the mistakes, the prejudices, nay, the very weakness and wickedness of our fellow-creatures.

Away, then, with disquietudes! Let us pray with the honest weaver of Kilbarchan, "L—d send us a gude conceit o' oursel!" Or, in the words of the old sang,

"Who does me disdain, I can scorn them again,
And I'll never mind any such foes."

—

Your thoughts on religion shall be welcome. You may perhaps distrust me when I say 'tis also *my* favourite topic; but mine is the religion of the bosom. I hate the very idea of a controversial divinity; as I firmly believe that every honest, upright man, of whatever sect, will be accepted of the Deity. I despise the superstition of a fanatic, but I love the religion of a man.

—

Why have I not heard from you? To-day I well expected it; and before supper, when a letter to me was announced, my heart danced with rapture: but behold! 'twas some fool who had taken it into his head to turn poet; and made an offering of the first fruits of his nonsense.

—

I believe there is no holding converse, or carrying on correspondence, with an amiable fine wo-

man, without some mixture of that delicious passion, whose most devoted slave I have more than once had the honour of being: but why be hurt or offended on that account? Can no honest man have a prepossession for a fine woman, but he must run his head against an intrigue? Take a little of the tender witchcraft of love, and add to it the generous, the honorable sentiments of manly friendship; and I know but *one* more delightful morsel, which few, few in any rank, ever taste. Such a composition is like adding cream to strawberries—it not only gives the fruit a more elegant richness, but has a peculiar deliciousness of its own.

—

Nothing astonishes me more, when a little sickness clogs the wheels of life, than the thoughtless career we run in the hour of health. "None saith, where is God, my maker, that giveth me songs in the night; who teacheth us more knowledge than the beasts of the field, and more understanding than the fowls of the air."

—

I had a letter from my old friend a while ago, but it was so dry, so distant, so like a card to one of his clients that I could scarce bear to read it. He is a good, honest fellow; and can write a friendly letter, which would do equal honour to his head and his heart, as a whole sheaf of his letters I have by me will witness; and though Fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach *now*, as she did *then*, when he first honoured me with his friendship*, yet I am as proud as ever; and when I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at my full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground which I have a right to.

—

You would laugh, were you to see me where I am just now:—Here am I set, a solitary hermit, in the solitary room of a solitary inn, with a solitary bottle of wine by me—as grave and stupid as an owl—but like that owl, still faithful to my old song; in confirmation of which, my dear * * * * here is your good health! May the handwal'd bennisons o' heaven bless your bonie face; and the wratch wha skellies at your weelfare, may the auld tinkler deil get him to clout his rotten heart! Amen!

—

I mentioned to you my letter to Dr. Moore, giving an account of my life; it is truth, every word of it; and will give you the just idea of a man whom you have honoured with your friendship. I wish you to see me *as I am*. I am, as most people of my trade are, a strange *will o' wisp* being, the victim, too frequently, of much imprudence and many follies. My great constituent elements are pride and passion. The first I have endeavoured to humanize into integrity and honour; the latter makes me a devotee to the warmest degree of enthusiasm, in love, religion, or friendship; either of them, or all together, as I happen to be inspired.

—

What trifling silliness is the childish fondness of the every-day children of the world! 'Tis the unmeaning toying of the younglings of the fields and forests: but where sentiment and fancy unite their sweets; where taste and delicacy refine; where wit adds the flavour, and good sense gives strength and spirit to all, what a delicious draught is the hour of tender endearment!—beauty and grace in the arms of truth and honour, in all the luxury of mutual love!

——— Innocence
Looks gaily smiling on; while rosy pleasure
Hides young desire amid her flowery wreath,
And pours her cup luxuriant; mantling high
The sparkling heavenly vintage, *love* and *bliss!*

—

Those of either sex, but particularly the female, who are lukewarm in the most important of all things, religion—"O my soul, come not thou into their secret!" I will lay before you the outlines of my belief. He, who is our author and preserver, and will one day be our judge, must be (not for his sake in the way of duty, but from the native impulse of our hearts) the object of our reverential awe, and grateful adoration. He is almighty and all-bounteous; we are weak and dependent; hence, prayer and every other sort of devotion.—"He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life;" consequently it must be in every one's power to embrace his offer of "everlasting life;" otherwise he could not, in justice, condemn those who did not. A mind pervaded, actuated, and governed by purity, truth, and charity, though it does not *merit* heaven, yet is an absolutely necessary pre-requisite, without which heaven can neither be obtained nor enjoyed; and, by divine promise, such a mind shall never fail of attaining "everlasting life:" hence, the impure, the deceiving, and the uncharitable, exclude themselves from eternal bliss, by their unfitness for enjoying it. The Supreme Being has put the immediate administration of all this, for wise and good ends known to himself, into the hands of Jesus Christ, a great personage, whose relation to him we cannot comprehend, but whose relation to us is a Guide and Saviour; and who, except for our own obstinacy and misconduct, will bring us all, though various ways, and by various means, to bliss at last.

These are my tenets, my friend. My creed is pretty nearly expressed in the last clause of *Jomie Dean's* grace, an honest weaver in Ayrshire: "Lord, grant that we may lead a gude life! for a gude life maks a gude end, at least it helps weel!"

* Alluding to the time of his first appearance in Edinburgh.

*A Mother's Address to her Infant**.*

My blessins upon thy sweet, wee lippie!
My blessins upon thy bonnie e'e brie!
Thy smiles are sae like my blythe sogcr laddie,
Thou's aye the dearer and dearer to me!

—

I am an odd being: some yet unnamed feelings, things, not principles, but better than whims, carry me farther than boasted reason ever did a philosopher.

—

There's naethin like the honest nappy!
Whaur'll ye e'er see men sae happy,
Or women sonsie, saft, an' sappy,
'Tween morn an' morn,
As them wha like to taste the drappie
In glass or horn.

I've seen me daez't upon a time;
I scarce could wink or see a stime;
Just ae hauf muchkin does me prime,
Ought less is little,
Then back I rattle on the rhyme
As glegg's a whittle!

—

Coarse minds are not aware how much they injure the keenly-feeling tie of bosom friendship, when, in their foolish officiousness, they mention what nobody cares for recollecting. People of nice sensibility, and generous minds, have a certain intrinsic dignity, that fires at being trifled with, or lowered, or even too nearly approached.

—

Some days, some nights, nay some *hours*, like the "ten righteous persons in Sodom," save the rest of the vapid, tiresome, miserable months and years of life.

—

To be feelingly alive to kindness and unkindness, is a charming female character.

—

I have a little infirmity in my disposition, that where I fondly love or highly esteem, I cannot bear reproach.

—

If I have robbed you of a friend, God forgive me. But be comforted: let us raise the tone of our feelings a little higher and bolder. A fellow-creature who leaves us, who spurns without just cause, though once our bosom friend—up with a little honest pride—let him go!

—

A decent means of livelihood in the world, an approving God, a peaceful conscience, and one firm, trusty friend; can any body that has these be said to be unhappy?

—

The dignified and dignifying consciousness of an honest man, and the well-grounded trust in approving heaven, are two most substantial sources of happiness.

Give me, my Maker, to remember thee! "Give me to feel another's woe;" and continue with me that dear-lov'd friend that feels with mine!

—

Your religious sentiments I revere. If you have, on some suspicious evidence, from some lying oracle, learned that I despise or ridicule so sacredly important a matter as real religion, you have much misconstrued your friend. "I am not mad, most noble Festus!" Have you ever met a perfect character? Do we not sometimes rather exchange faults than get rid of them? For instance: I am perhaps tired with and shocked at a life, too much the prey of giddy inconsistencies and thoughtless follies; by degrees I grow sober, prudent, and statedly pious; I say *statedly*, because the most unaffected devotion is not at all inconsistent with my first character. I join the world in congratulating myself on the happy change. But let me pry more narrowly into this affair: have I, at bottom, any thing of a secret pride in these endowments and emendations? have I nothing of a presbyterian sourness, a hypercritical severity, when I survey my less regular neighbours? In a word, have I missed all those nameless and numberless modifications of indistinct selfishness, which are so near our own eyes, that we can scarce bring them within our sphere of vision, and which the known spotless cambric of our character hides from the ordinary observer?

—

My definition of worth is short: truth and humanity respecting our fellow-creatures; reverence and humility in the presence of that Being, my Creator and Preserver, and who, I have every reason to believe, will one day be my Judge. The first part of my definition is the creature of unbiassed instinct; the last is the child of after reflection. Where I found these two essentials, I would gently note, and slightly mention, any attendant flaws—flaws, the marks, the consequences of human nature.

* These tender lines were added by the poet, to old words that he had collected, of a song called *Bonnie Dundee*, which appeared for the first time in print in the *Musical Museum*. E.

How wretched is the condition of one who is haunted with conscious guilt, and trembling under the idea of dreaded vengeance! and what a placid calm, what a charming secret enjoyment it gives, to bosom the kind feelings of friendship and the fond throes of love! Out upon the tempest of anger, the acrimonious gall of fretful impatience, the sullen frost of lowering resentment, or the corroding poison of withered envy! They eat up the immortal part of man! If they spent their fury only on the unfortunate objects of them, it would be something in their favour; but these miserable passions, like traitor Iscariot, betray their lord and master.

Thou, Almighty Author of peace, and goodness, and love! do thou give me the social heart that kindly tastes of every man's cup! Is it a draught of joy?--warm and open my heart to share it with cordial, unenvying rejoicing! Is it the bitter potion of sorrow?—melt my heart with sincerely sympathetic woe! Above all, give me the manly mind, that resolutely exemplifies, in life and manners, those sentiments which I would wish to be thought to possess! The friend of my soul--there may I never deviate from the firmest fidelity, and most active kindness! there may the most sacred, inviolate honour, the most faithful, kindling constancy, ever watch and animate my every thought and imagination!

Did you ever meet with the following lines spoken of religion?

" 'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
'Tis *this*, that gilds the horror of our night!
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
'Tis *this* that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction, or repels its dart;
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies."

I met with these verses very early in life, and was so delighted with them, that I have them by me, copied at school.

I have heard and read a good deal of philosophy, benevolence, and greatness of soul; and when rounded with the flourish of declamatory periods, or poured in the mellifluence of Parnassian measure, they have a tolerable effect on a musical ear; but when all these high-sounding professions are compared with the very act and deed, as it is usually performed, I do not think there is any thing in or belonging to human nature so badly disproportionate. In fact, were it not for a very few of our kind, among whom an honoured friend of mine, whom to you, sir, I will not name, is a distinguished instance, the very existence of magnanimity, generosity, and all their kindred virtues, would be as much a question with metaphysicians as the existence of witchcraft.

—

There is no time when the conscious, thrilling chords of love and friendship give such delight, as in the pensive hour of what Thomson calls "Philosophic Melancholy." The family of misfortune, a numerous group of brothers and sisters! they need a resting place to their souls. Unnoticed, often condemned by the world; in some degree, perhaps, condemned by themselves, they feel the full enjoyment of ardent love, delicate tender endearments, mutual esteem, and mutual reliance.

In this light I have often admired religion. In proportion as we are wrung with grief, or distracted with anxiety, the ideas of a compassionate Deity, an Almighty Protector, are doubly dear.

—

I have been this morning taking a peep through, as Young finely says, "the dark postern of time long elapsed;" 'twas a rueful prospect! What a tissue of thoughtlessness, weakness, and folly! My life reminded me of a ruined temple. What strength, what proportion in some parts! what unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others! I kneeled down before the Father of Mercies, and said, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight am no more worthy to be called thy son." I rose, eased and strengthened.

LETTERS

FROM WILLIAM BURNS,

AND

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS DEATH.

LETTERS

FROM WILLIAM BURNS TO THE POET.

The Editor conceived that it might not be uninteresting to the admirers of Burns, to peruse the following letters, selected from a greater number that have fallen into his hands. They are the genuine and artless productions of his younger brother, *William Burns*, a young man, who, after having served an apprenticeship to the trade of a saddler, took his road towards the south, and having resided a short time at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, arrived in London, where he died of a putrid fever in the year 1790.

If the reader supposes he shall meet in these letters that vivacity of genius, which the near relationship of the writer to the poet might lead him to expect, he will be disappointed. They contain, indeed, little more than the common transactions incident to the humble line of life of their author, expressed in simple and unaffected language. But to those whose admiration and affection for the poet extend to his relations and concerns, they are not without their value. They demonstrate the kind and fraternal attachment of Burns, in a strong and amiable point of view; they form an additional eulogy on the memory of the exeellent father, who had given all his sons an education superior to their situation in life, and assiduously inculcated upon them the best principles of virtue and morality; and they exhibit the picture of a contented and uncontaminated youth, who, as he would never have attempted the dangerous heights to which the poet aspired, would never have experienced those pangs of disappointment and remorse which incessantly agitated his bosom; but would

"Through the calm sequestered vale of life,
Have kept the noiseless tenour of his way."

No. I.

To Mr. ROBERT BURNS, Ellisland.

Longtown, Feb. 15, 1789.

Dear sir,

As I am now in a manner only entering into the world, I begin this our correspondence, with a view of being a gainer by your advice, more than ever you can be by any thing I can write you of what I see, or what I hear, in the course of my wanderings. I know not how it happened, but you were more shy of your counsel than I could have wished, the time I staid with you; whether it was because you thought it would disgust me to have my faults freely told me while I was dependent on you; or whether it was because that you saw by my indolent disposition, your instructions would have no effect, I cannot determine; but if it proceeded from any of the above causes, the reason of withholding your admonition is now done away, for I now stand on my own bottom, and that indolence, which I am very conscious of, is something rubbed off, by being called to act in life, whether I will or not; and my inexperience, which I daily feel, makes me wish for that advice which you are so able to give, and which I can only expect from you or Gilbert, since the loss of the kindest and ablest of fathers.

The morning after I went from the Isle, I left Dumfries about five o'clock, and came to Annan to breakfast, and staid about an hour; and I reached this place about two o'clock. I have got work here, and I intend to stay a month or six weeks, and then go forward, as I wish to be at York about the latter end of summer, where I propose to spend next winter, and go on for London in the spring.

I have the promise of seven shillings a week from Mr. Proctor, while I stay here, and sixpence more if he succeeds himself, for he has only new begun trade here. I am to pay four shillings per week of board wages, so that my neat income here will be much the same as in Dumfries.

The inclosed you will send to Gilbert with the first opportunity. Please to send me the first Wednesday after you receive this, by the Carlisle waggon, two of my coarse shirts, one of my best linen ones, my velveteen vest, and a neckcloth; write to me along with them, and direct to me, Saddler, in Longtown, and they will not miscarry, for I am boarded in the waggoner's house. You may either let them be given into the waggon, or send them to Coulthard and Gellebourn's shop, and they will forward them. Pray write me often while I stay here. I wish you would send me a letter, though never so small, every week, for they will be no expense to me, and but little trouble to you. Please to give my best wishes to my sister-in-law, and believe me to be your affectionate

And obliged brother,
WILLIAM BURNS.

P. S. The great coat you gave me at parting did me singular service the day I came here, and merits my hearty thanks. From what has been said, the conclusion is this; that my hearty thanks and my best wishes are all that you and my sister must expect from

W. B

No. II.

Newcastle, 24th Jan. 1790.

Dear brother,

I wrote you about six weeks ago, and have expected to hear from you every post since, but I suppose your excise business, which you hinted at in your last, has prevented you from writing. By the bye, when and how have you got in the excise; and what division have you got about Dumfries? These questions please to answer in your next, if more important matter do not occur. But in the mean time let me have the letter to John Murdoch, which Gilbert wrote me you meant to send; inclose it in your's to me, and let me have them as soon as possible, for I intend to sail for London, in a fortnight, or three weeks at farthest.

You promised me, when I was intending to go to Edinburgh, to write me some instructions about behaviour in companies rather above my station, to which I might be eventually introduced. As I may be introduced into such companies at Murdoch's, or on his account when I go to London, I wish you would write me some such instructions now: I never had more need of them, for having spent little of my time in company of any sort since I came to Newcastle, I have almost forgot the common civilities of life. To these instructions, pray add some of a moral kind, for though (either through the strength of early impressions, or the frigidity of my constitution) I have hitherto withstood the temptation to those vices, to which young fellows of my station and time of life are so much addicted, yet, I do not know if my virtue will be able to withstand the more powerful temptations of the metropolis: yet, through God's assistance and your instructions, I hope to weather the storm.

Give the compliments of the season and my love to my sisters, and all the rest of your family. Tell Gilbert the first time you write him, that I am well, and that I will write him either when I sail or when I arrive at London.

I am, &c.

W. B.

No. III.

London, 21st March, 1790.

Dear brother,

I have been here three weeks come Tuesday, and would have written to you sooner, but was not settled in a place of work.—We were ten days on our passage from Shields; the weather being calm. I was not sick, except one day when it blew pretty hard. I got into work the Friday after I came to town; I wrought there only eight days, their job being done. I got work again in a shop in the Strand, the next day after I left my former master. It is only a temporary place, but I expect to be settled soon in a shop to my mind, although it will be a harder task than I at first imagined, for there are such swarms of fresh hands just come from the country, that the town is quite overstocked, and, except one is a particular good workman (which you know I am not, nor I am afraid ever will be) it is hard to get a place: however, I don't yet despair to bring up my lee-way, and shall endeavour, if possible, to sail within three or four points of the wind. The encouragement here is not what I expected, wages being very low in proportion to the expense of living, but yet, if I can only lay by the money that is spent by others in my situation in dissipation and riot, I expect soon to return you the money I borrowed of you, and live comfortably besides.

In the mean time I wish you would send up all my best linen shirts to London, which you may easily do by sending them to some of your Edinburgh friends, to be shipped from Leith. Some of them are too little; don't send any but what are good; and I wish one of my sisters could find as much time as to trim my shirts at the breast, for there is no such thing to be seen here as a plain shirt, even for wearing, which is what I want these for. I mean to get one or two new shirts here for Sundays, but I assure you that linen here is a very expensive article. I am going to write to Gilbert to send me an Ayrshire cheese; if he can spare it he will send it to you, and you may send it with the shirts, but I expect to hear from you before that time. The cheese I could get here; but I will have a pride in eating Ayrshire cheese in London, and the expense of sending it will be little, as you are sending the shirts any how.

I write this by J. Stevenson, in his lodgings, while he is writing to Gilbert. He is well and hearty, which is a blessing to me as well as to him: we were at Covent Garden chapel this forenoon, to hear the *Calf* preach; he is grown very fat, and is as boisterous as ever*. There is a whole colony of Kilmarnock people here, so we don't want for acquaintance.

Remember me to my sisters and all the family. I shall give you all the observations I have made in London in my next, when I shall have seen more of it.

I am, dear brother, yours, &c.

W. B.

No. IV.

From Mr. MURDOCH to the BARD,

Giving an account of the death of his brother William.

Hart-street, Bloomsbury-Square, London, September 14th, 1790.

My dear friend,

Yours of the 16th of July I received on the 26th, in the afternoon, per favour of my friend Mr. Kennedy, and at the same time was informed that your brother was ill. Being engaged in business till late that evening, I set out next morning to see him, and had thought of three or four medical gentlemen of my acquaintance, to one or other of whom I might apply for advice, provided it should be necessary. But when I went to Mr. Barber's, to my great astonishment and heart-felt

* Vide *Poetical Address to the Calf*, p. 243.

grief, I found that my young friend had, on Saturday, bid an everlasting farewel to all sublunary things.—It was about a fortnight before that he had found me out, by Mr. Stevenson's accidentally calling at my shop to buy something. We had only one interview, and that was highly entertaining to me in several respects. He mentioned some instruction I had given him when very young, to which he said he owed, in a great measure the philanthropy he possessed.—He also took notice of my exhorting you all, when I wrote, about eight years ago, to the man who, of all mankind that I ever knew, stood highest in my esteem, " not to let go your integrity."—You may easily conceive that such conversation was both pleasing and encouraging to me: I anticipated a deal of rational happiness from future conversations.—Vain are our expectations and hopes. They are so almost always—perhaps (nay, certainly) for our good. Were it not for disappointed hopes, we could hardly spend a thought on another state of existence, or be in any degree reconciled to the quitting of this.

I know of no one source of consolation to those who have lost young relatives equal to that of their being of a good disposition, and of a promising character.

* * * * * *

Be assured, my dear friend, that I cordially sympathize with you all, and particularly with Mrs. Burns, who is undoubtedly one of the most tender and affectionate mothers that ever lived. Remember me to her in the most friendly manner, when you see her, or write.—Please present my best compliments to Mrs. R. Burns, and to your brother and sisters. There is no occasion for me to exhort you to filial duty, and to use your united endeavours in rendering the evening of life as comfortable as possible to a mother, who has dedicated so great a part of it in promoting your temporal and spiritual welfare.

Your letter to Dr. Moore, I delivered at his house, and shall most likely know your opinion of Zeluco, the first time I meet with him. I wish and hope for a long letter. Be particular about your mother's health. I hope she is too much a Christian to be afflicted above measure, or to sorrow as those who have no hope.

One of the most pleasing hopes I have is to visit you all; but I am commonly disappointed in what I most ardently wish for.

I am,

Dear sir,

Yours sincerely,

JOHN MURDOCH.

POETRY.

EPISTLES IN VERSE.

To J. LAPRAIK.

Sept. 13*th*, 1785.

Guid speed an' furder to you, Johny,
Guid health, hale hans, an' weather bonny;
Now when ye're nickan down fu' canny
The staff o' bread,
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' brandy
To clear your head.

May boreas never thresh your rigs,
Nor kick your rickles aff their legs,
Sendin' the stuff o'er muirs an' haggs
Like drivin' wrack;
But may the tapmast grain that wags
Come to the sack.

I'm bizzie too, an' skelpin' at it,
But bitter, daudin showers hae wat it,
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it
Wi' muckle wark,
An' took my jocteleg* an' whatt it,
Like ony clark.

It's now twa months that I'm your debtor,
For your braw nameless, dateless letter,
Abusin' me for harsh ill-nature
On holy men,
While deil a hair yoursel ye're better,
But mair profane.

But let the kirk-folk ring their bells,
Let's sing about our noble sels;
We'll cry nae jads frae heathen hills
To help, or roose us,
But browster wives† an' whiskie stills,
They are the muses.

Your friendship, sir, I winna quat it,
An' if ye mak' objections at it,
Then han' in nieve some day we'll knot it,
An' witness take,
An' when wi' usquabae we've wat it
It winna break.

But if the beast and branks be spar'd
Till kye be gaun without the herd,
An' a' the vittel in the yard,
An' theekit right,
I mean your ingle-side to guard
Ae winter night.

Then muse-inspirin' aqua-vitæ
Shall make us baith sae blythe an' witty,
Till ye forget ye're auld an' gatty,
An' be as canty
As ye were nine years less than thretty,
Sweet ane an' twenty!

But stooks are cowpet* wi' the blast,
An' now the sinn keeks in the west,
Then I maun rin amang the rest
An' quat my chanter;
Sae I subscribe mysel in haste,
Yours, Rab the Ranter†.

TO THE REV. JOHN M'MATH,

Inclosing a copy of Holy Willie's Prayer, which he had requested.

Sept. 17*th*, 1785.

While at the stook the shearers cow'r
To shun the bitter blaudin' show'r,
Or in gulravage‡ rinnin scow'r
To pass the time,
To you I dedicate the hour
In idle rhyme.

My musie, tir'd wi' mony a sonnet
On gown, an' ban', an' douse black bonnet,
Is grown right eerie now she's done it,
Lest they should blame her,
An' rouse their holy thunder on it
And anathem her.

I own 'twas rash, an' rather hardy,
That I, a simple countra bardie,
Shou'd meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,
Wha, if they ken me,

---

* *Jocteleg*—a knife.

† *Browster wives*—alehouse wives.

* *Cowpet*—tumbled over.

† *Rab the Ranter*—It is very probable that the poet thus named himself after the *border piper*, so spiritedly introduced in the popular song of *Maggie Lauder*:—

"For I'm a piper to my trade,
My name is *Rab the Ranter*;
The lasses loup as they were daft,
When I blaw up my chanter."

‡ *Gulravage*—Running in a confused, disorderly manner, like boys when leaving school.

Can easy, wi' a single wordie,
Louse h-ll upon me.

But I gae mad at their grimaces,
Their sighan, cantan, grace-proud faces,
Their three-mile prayers, an' hauf-mile graces,
Their raxan conscience,
Whaws greed, revenge, an' pride disgraces
Waur nor their nonsense.

There's *Gaun**, miska't waur than a beast,
Wha has mair honour in his breast
Than mony scores as guid's the priest
Wha sae abus't him,
An' may a bard no crack his jest
What way they've use't him?

See him† the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word an' deed;
An' shall his fame an' honour bleed
By worthless skellums,
An' not a muse erect her head
To cowe the blellums?

O Pope, had I thy satire's darts
To gie the rascals their deserts,
I'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,
An' tell aloud
Their jugglin' hocus pocus arts
To cheat the crowd.

God knows, I'm no the thing I shou'd be,
Nor am I even the thing I cou'd be,
But twenty times, I rather wou'd be
An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a lass,
An honest man may like a glass,
But mean revenge an' malice fause
He'll still disdain,
An' then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like some we ken.

They take religion in their mouth;
They talk o' mercy, grace, an' truth,
For what? to gie their malice skouth
On some puir wight,
An' hunt him down, o'er right an' ruth,
To ruin streight.

All hail, religion! maid divine!
Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,
Who in her rough imperfect line
Thus daurs to name thee;
To stigmatize false friends of thine
Can ne'er defame thee.

Tho' blotch't an' foul wi' mony a stain,
An' far unworthy of thy train,
With trembling voice I tune my strain
To join with those,
Who boldly dare thy cause maintain
In spite of foes:

In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,
In spite of undermining jobs,
In spite o' dark banditti stabs
At worth an' merit,
By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,
But hellish spirit.

O Ayr, my dear, my native ground,
Within thy presbytereal bound
A candid lib'ral band is found
Of public teachers,
As men, as Christians too renown'd,
An' manly preachers.

Sir, in that circle you are nam'd;
Sir, in that circle you are fam'd;
An' some, by whom your doctrine's blam'd,
(Which gies you honour,)
Even sir, by them your heart's esteem'd
An' winning manner.

Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,
An' if impertinent I've been,
Impute it not, good sir, in ane
Whase heart ne'er wrang'd ye,
But to his utmost would befriend
Ought that belang'd ye.

To GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq. Mauchline.

(Recommending a boy.)

Mosgaville, May 3, 1786.

I hold it, sir, my bounden duty,
To warn you how that master Tootie,
Alias, laird M'Gaun*,
Was here to hire yon lad away
'Bout whom ye spak the tither day,
An' wad hae don't aff han':
But lest he learn the callan tricks,
As faith I muckle doubt him,
Like scrapin' out auld Crummie's nicks,
An' tellin' lies about them:
As lieve then I'd have then,
Your clerkship he should sair,
If sae be, ye may be,
Not fitted otherwhere.

Altho' I say't it, he's gleg enough,
An' bout a house that's rude an' rough,
The boy might learn to *swear;*

---

* Gavin Hamilton, esq.

† The poet has introduced the two first lines of this stanza into the dedication of his works to Mr. Hamilton.

* *Master Tootie* then lived in Mauchline; a dealer in cows. It was his common practice to cut the nicks or markings from the horns of cattle, to disguise their age.—He was an artful, trick-contriving character; hence he is called a *snick-drawer*. In the poet's "*Address to the Deil*," he styles that august personage an *auld, snick-drawing* dog! E.

But then wi' *you*, he'll be sae taught,
An' get sic fair *example* straught,
I hae na ony fear.
Ye'll catechise him every quirk,
An' shore him weel wi' *hell;*
An' gar him follow to the *kirk*——
—Aye when ye gang *yoursel.*
If ye, then, maun be then
Frae home this comin' Friday,
Then please, sir, to lea'e, sir,
The orders wi' your lady.

My word of honour I hae gien,
In Paisley John's, that night at e'en,
To meet the *warld's worm;*
To try to get the twa to gree,
An' name the airles* an' the fee,
In legal mode an' form:
I ken he well a *snick* can draw,
When simple bodies let him;
An' if a *Devil* be at a',
In faith he's sure to get him.
To phrase you an' praise you,
Ye ken your laureat scorns:
The pray'r still, you share still,
Of grateful *minstrel Burns.*

To Mr. M'ADAM, of Craigen-Gillan,

In answer to an obliging letter he sent in the commencement of my poetic career.

Sir, o'er a gill I gat your card,
I trow it made me proud;
See wha taks notice o' the bard!
I lap and cry'd fu' loud.

Now deil-ma-care about their jaw,
The senseless, gawky million;
I'll cock my nose aboon them a',
I'm roos'd by Craigen-Gillan!

'Twas noble, sir; 'twas like yoursel,
To grant your high protection:
A great man's smile, ye ken fu' well,
Is aye a blest infection.

Tho', by his† banes wha in a tub
Match'd Macedonian Sandy!
On my ain legs thro' dirt and dub,
I independent stand aye.—

And when those legs to gude, warm kail,
Wi' welcome canna bear me;
A lee dyke-side, a sybow-tail,
A barley-scone shall cheer me.

Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath
O' mony flow'ry simmers!
And bless your bonnie lasses baith,
I'm tald they're loosome kimmers!

And God bless young Dunaskin's laird,
The blossom of our gentry!
And may he wear an auld man's beard,
A credit to his country.

To CAPTAIN RIDDEL, Glenriddel.

(Extempore Lines on returning a Newspaper.)

Ellisland, Monday evening.

Your news and review, sir, I've read through and through, sir,
With little admiring or blaming:
The papers are barren of home-news or foreign,
No murders or rapes worth the naming.

Our friends the reviewers, those chippers and hewers,
Are judges of mortar and stone, sir;
But of *meet*, or *unmeet*, in a *fabric complete*,
I'll boldly pronounce they are none, sir.

My goose-quill too rude is to tell all your goodness,
Bestowed on your servant, the poet;
Would to God I had one like a beam of the sun,
And then all the world, sir, should know it!

To TERRAUGHTY*,

On his Birth-Day.

Health to the Maxwell's vet'ran chief!
Health, aye unsour'd by care or grief!
Inspir'd I turn'd Fate's sybil leaf,
This natal morn,
I see thy life is stuff o' prief,
Scarce quite half worn.

This day thou metes threescore eleven,
And I can tell that bounteous Heaven
(The second sight, ye ken, is given
To ilka *poet*)
On thee a tack o' seven times seven
Will yet bestow it.

If envious buckies view wi' sorrow
Thy lengthen'd days on this blest morrow,
May desolation's lang-teeth'd harrow,
Nine miles an hour,
Rake them, like Sodom and Gomorrah,
In brunstane stoure!

But for thy friends, and they are mony,
Baith honest men and lasses bonnie,
May couthie fortune, kind and cannie,
In social glee,
Wi' mornings blythe and e'enings funny
Bless them and thee!

---

* *The airles*—earnest-money.
† Diogenes.

* Mr. Maxwell, of Terraughty, near Dumfries.

Fareweel, auld birkie! Lord be near ye,
And then the Deil he daur na steer ye:
Your friends aye love, your faes aye fear ye;
For me, shame fa' me,
If neist my heart I dinna wear ye
While *Burns* they ca' me.

To a LADY,

With a present of a pair of Drinking Glasses.

Fair empress of the poet's soul,
And queen of poetesses;
Clarinda, take this little boon,
This humble pair of glasses.

And fill them high with generous juice,
As generous as your mind;
And pledge me in the generous toast—
"*The whole of human kind!*"

"*To those who love us!*"—second fill;
But not to those whom we love;
Lest we love those who love not us!—
A third—"*To thee and me, love!*"

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

TRAGIC FRAGMENT.

IN my early years nothing less would serve me than courting the tragic muse.—I was, I think, about eighteen or nineteen when I sketched the outlines of a tragedy forsooth; but the bursting of a cloud of family misfortunes, which had for some time threatened us, prevented my farther progress. In those days I never wrote down any thing; except a speech or two, the whole has escaped my memory. The following, which I most distinctly remember, was an exclamation from a great character:—great in occasional instances of generosity, and daring at times in villanies. He is supposed to meet with a child of misery, and exclaims to himself—

"All devil as I am, a damned wretch,
A harden'd, stubborn, unrepenting villain,
Still my heart melts at human wretchedness;
And with sincere tho' unavailing sighs,
I view the helpless children of distress.
With tears indignant I behold th' oppressor
Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.
Even you, ye helpless crew, I pity you;
Ye, whom the seeming good think sin to pity;
Ye poor, despis'd, abandon'd vagabonds,
Whom vice, as usual, has turn'd o'er to ruin.
—O, but for kind, tho' ill-requited friends,
I had been driven forth like you forlorn,
The most detested, worthless wretch among you!"

THE VOWELS—A Tale.

'Twas where the birch and sounding thong are ply'd,
The noisy domicile of pedant pride;
Where ignorance her darkening vapour throws,
And cruelty directs the thickening blows;
Upon a time, sir Abece the great,
In all his pedagogic powers elate,
His awful chair of state resolves to mount,
And call the trembling vowels to account.—
First entered A, a grave, broad, solemn wight,
But, ah! deform'd, dishonest to the sight!
His twisted head look'd backward on his way,
And flagrant from the scourge he grunted, *ai!*
Reluctant, E stalk'd in; with piteous race
The justling tears ran down his honest face!
That name, that well-worn name, and all his own,
Pale he surrenders at the tyrant's throne!
The pedant stifles keen the Roman sound
Not all his mongrel diphthongs can compound;
And next the title following close behind,
He to the nameless, ghastly wretch assign'd.
The cobweb'd gothic dome resounded, Y!
In sullen vengeance, I disdain'd reply:
The pedant swung his felon cudgel round,
And knock'd the groaning vowel to the ground!
In rueful apprehension enter'd O,
The wailing minstrel of despairing woe;
Th' inquisitor of Spain, the most expert,
Might there have learnt new mysteries of his art:
So grim, deform'd, with horrors entering U,
His dearest friend and brother scarcely knew!
As trembling U stood staring all aghast,
The pedant in his left hand clutch'd him fast,
In helpless infants' tears he dipp'd his right,
Baptiz'd him *en*, and kick'd him from his sight.

The following sketch seems to be one of a series intended for a projected work, under the title of "The Poet's Progress." *This character was sent as a specimen, accompanied by a letter to* professor Dugald Stewart, *in which it is thus noticed.* "*The fragment beginning* 'A little, upright, pert, tart, &c.' *I have not shown to any man living, till now I send it to you. It forms the postulata, the axioms, the definition of a character, which, if it appear at all, shall be placed in a variety of lights. This particular part I send you merely as a sample of my hand at portrait sketching.*"

SKETCH.

A little, upright, pert, tart, tripping wight,
And still his precious self his dear delight:
Who loves his own smart shadow in the streets,
Better than e'er the fairest she he meets.
A man of fashion too, he made his tour,
Learn'd *vive la bagatelle, et vive l'amour*:
So travell'd monkies their grimace improve,
Polish their grin, nay, sigh for ladies' love.
Much specious lore, but little understood;
Fineering oft outshines the solid wood:
His solid sense—by inches you must tell,
But mete his cunning by the old Scots ell;
His meddling vanity, a busy fiend,
Still making work his selfish craft must mend.

SCOTS PROLOGUE,

For Mr. Sutherland's Benefit Night, Dumfries.

What needs this din about the town o' Lon'on,
How this new play an' that new sang is comin?
Why is outlandish stuff sae meikle courted?
Does nonsense mend like whiskey, when imported

Is there nae poet, burning keen for fame,
Will try to gie us sangs and plays at hame?
For comedy abroad he need na toil,
A fool and knave are plants of every soil;
Nor need he haunt as far as Rome and Greece,
To gather matter for a serious piece;
There's themes enough in Caledonian story,
Would shew the tragic muse in a' her glory.—

Is there no daring bard will rise, and tell
How glorious Wallace stood, how hapless fell?
Where are the muses fled that could produce
A drama worthy o' the name o' Bruce;
How here, even here, he first unsheath'd the sword
'Gainst mighty England and her guilty lord;
And after mony a bloody, deathless doing,
Wrench'd his dear country from the jaws of ruin?
O for a Shakspeare or an Otway scene.
To draw the lovely, hapless Scottish queen!
Vain all the omnipotence of female charms
'Gainst headlong, ruthless, mad Rebellion's arms.
She fell, but fell with spirit truly Roman,
To glut the vengeance of a rival woman:
A woman, tho' the phrase may seem uncivil,
As able and as cruel as the Devil!
One Douglas lives in Home's immortal page,
But Douglasses were heroes every age:
And tho' your fathers, prodigal of life,
A Douglas followed to the martial strife,
Perhaps if bowls row right, and right succeeds,
Ye yet may follow where a Douglas leads!

As ye hae generous done, if a' the land
Would take the muses' servants by the hand;
Not only here, but patronize, befriend them,
And where ye justly can commend, commend them;
And aiblins, when they winna stand the test,
Wink hard and say, the folks hae done their best!
Would a' the land do this, then I'll be caution
Ye'll soon hae poets o' the Scottish nation,
Will gar fame blaw until her trumpet crack,
And warsle time an' lay him on his back!

For us and for our stage should ony spier,
"Whose aught thae chiels maks a' this bustle here?"
My best leg foremost, I'll set up my brow,
We have the honour to belong to you!
We're your ain bairns, e'en guide us as ye like,
But, like good mithers, shore before you strike.—
And grateful still I hope ye'll ever find us,
For a' the patronage and meikle kindness
We've got frae a' professions, setts, and ranks:
God help us! we're but poor—ye'se get but thanks.

—

AN EXTEMPORANEOUS EFFUSION,

On being appointed to the Excise.

Searching auld wives' barrels,
Och, oh! the day!
That clarty barm should stain my laurels;
But—what'll ye say!
These muvin' things ca'd wives and weans
Wad muve the very hearts o' stanes!

—

TO THE OWL—By John M'Creddie*.

Sad bird of night, what sorrow calls thee forth,
To vent thy plaints thus in the midnight hour?
Is it some blast that gathers in the north,
Threat'ning to nip the verdure of thy bow'r?

Is it, sad owl, that autumn strips the shade,
And leave thee here, unshelter'd and forlorn?
Or fear that winter will thy nest invade?
Or friendless melancholy bids thee mourn?

Shut out, lone birds, from all the feather'd train,
To tell thy sorrows to the unheeding gloom;
No friend to pity when thou dost complain,
Grief all thy thought, and solitude thy home.

Sing on, sad mourner! I will bless thy strain,
And pleas'd in sorrow listen to thy song:
Sing on, sad mourner! to the night complain,
While the lone echo wafts thy notes along.

Is beauty less, when down the glowing cheek,
Sad, piteous tears in native sorrows fall?
Less kind the heart when anguish bids it break?
Less happy he who lists to pity's call?

Ah no, sad owl! nor is thy voice less sweet,
That sadness tunes it, and that grief is there;

* Burns sometimes wrote poems in the old ballad style, which, for reasons best known to himself, he gave to the world as songs of the *olden time*. That famous soldier's song in particular, first printed in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, *General Correspondence*, No. LX, beginning

Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
An' fill it in a silver tassie;
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonnie lassie;

has been pronounced by some of our best living poets, an *inimitable relique* of some *ancient minstrel!* Yet I have discovered it to be the actual production of *Burns* himself. The ballad of *Auld lang syne* was also introduced in this ambiguous manner, though there exist proofs that the two best stanzas of it are indisputably his; hence there are strong grounds for believing this poem also to be his production, notwithstanding the evidence to the contrary. It was *found among his MSS. in his own hand writing, with occasional interlineations, such as occur in all his primitive effusions.* It is worthy of his muse; but it is more in the style of *Gray* or *Collins*.

Should there, however, be a real author of the name of *John M'Creddie*, he will not be displeased at the publication of his poem, when he recollects that it had obtained the notice of *Burns*, and had undergone his correction. E.

That spring's gay notes, unskill'd, thou canst
repeat;
That sorrow bids thee to the gloom repair:

Nor that the treble songsters of the day
Are quite estranged, sad bird of night! from
thee;
Nor that the thrush deserts the evening spray,
When darkness calls thee from thy reverie.

From some old tow'r, thy melancholy dome,
While the gray walls and desert solitudes
Return each note, responsive to the gloom
Of ivied coverts and surrounding woods;

There hooting, I will list more pleas'd to thee,
Than ever lover to the nightingale;
Or drooping wretch, oppress'd with misery,
Lending his ear to some condoling tale.

—

ON SEEING THE BEAUTIFUL SEAT OF LORD G.

What dost thou in that mansion fair?
Flit, G———, and find
Some narrow, dirty, dungeon cave,
The picture of thy mind!

—

ON THE SAME.

No Stewart art thou, G———,
The Stewarts all were brave;
Besides, the Stewarts were but *fools*,
Not one of them a *knave*.

—

ON THE SAME.

Bright ran thy line, O, G———,
Thro' many a far-fam'd sire!
So ran the far-fam'd Roman way,
So ended in a *mire*.

—

ON THE SAME.

On the author being threatened with his resentment.

Spare me thy vengeance, G———,
In quiet let me live:
I ask no kindness at thy hand,
For thou hast none to give.

—

THE DEAN OF FACULTY.

A new ballad.

Tune—The Dragon of Wantley.

Dire was the hate at old Harlaw,
That Scot to Scot did carry;
And dire the discord Langside saw,
For beauteous, hapless Mary:
But Scot with Scot ne'er met so hot,
Or, were more in fury seen, sir,
Than 'twixt *Hal* and *Bob* for the famous job—
Who should be *Faculty's Dean*, sir.

This Hal for genius, wit, and lore,
Among the first was number'd;
But pious *Bob*, 'mid learning's store,
Commandment tenth remember'd.
Yet simple *Bob* the victory got,
And wan his heart's desire;
Which shews that heaven can boil the pot,
Though the devil p—s in the fire.

Squire *Hal*, besides, had in this case
Pretensions rather brassy,
For talents to deserve a place
Are qualifications saucy;
So their worships of the Faculty,
Quite sick of merit's rudeness,
Chose one who should owe it all, d' ye see,
To their gratis grace and goodness.

As once on Pisgah purg'd was the sight
Of a son of circumcision,
So may be, on this Pisgah height,
Bob's purblind mental vision:
Nay, *Bobby's* mouth may be open'd yet
Till for eloquence you hail him,
And swear he has the angel met
That met the ass of Balaam.

* * * *

—

EXTEMPORE IN THE COURT OF SESSION.

Tune—Gillicrankie.

LORD A——TE.

He clench'd his pamphlets in his fist,
He quoted and he hinted,
Till in a declamation-mist,
His argument he tint* it;
He gaped for 't, he gaped for 't,
He fand it was awa. man;
But what his common sense come short,
He eked out wi' law, man.

Mr. ER—NE.

Collected Harry stood awee,
Then open'd out his arm, man;
His lordship sat wi' ruefu' e'e,
And ey'd the gathering storm, man:
Like wind-driv'n hail it did assail,
Or torrents owre a lin, man;
The *Bench* sae wise lift up their eyes,
Hulf-wauken'd wi' the din, man.

* *Tint*—lost.

VERSES TO J. RANKEN,

(The person to whom his poem on shooting the partridge is addressed, while Ranken occupied the farm of Adamhill, in Ayrshire.)

Ae day, as Death, that grusome carl,
Was driving to the tither warl
A mixtie-maxtie motley squad,
And mony a guilt-bespotted lad;
Black gowns of each denomination,
And thieves of every rank and station,
From him that wears the star and garter,
To him that wintles* in a halter:
Asham'd himsel to see the wretches,
He mutter's glow'rin at the bitches,
By G-d I'll not be seen behint them,
Nor 'mong the sp'ritual core present them,
Without, at least, ae honest man,
To grace this d——d infernal clan."
By Adamhill a glance he threw,
" L—d God! (quoth he) I have it now,
There's just the man I want, i' faith,"
And quickly stoppit *Ranken's* breath†.

—

On hearing that there was falsehood in the

Rev. Dr. B——'s very looks.

That there is falsehood in his looks,
I must and will deny:
They say their master is a knave—
And sure they do not lie.

—

On a Schoolmaster in Cleish Parish, Fifeshire.

Here lie Willie M—hie's banes,
O Satan, when ye tak him,
Gie him the schulin of your weans;
For clever *Deils* he'll mak 'em!

—

ADDRESS TO GENERAL DUMOURIER.

(A Parody on Robin Adair.)

You're welcome to despots, Dumourier;
You're welcome to despots, Dumourier.
How does Dampiere do?
Ay, and Bournonville too?
Why did they not come along with you, Dumourier?
I will fight France with you, Dumourier,—
I will fight France with you, Dumourier:—
I will fight France with you,
I will take my chance with you;
By my soul I'll dance a dance with you, Dumourier.

Then let us fight about, Dumourier;
Then let us fight about, Dumourier;
Then let us fight about,
'Till freedom's spark is out,
Then we'll be d-mned no doubt—Dumourier*.

—

ELEGY

ON THE YEAR 1788.

A Sketch.

For lords or kings I dinna mourn,
E'en let them die—for that they're born:
But Oh! prodigious to reflect!
A *towmont*†, sirs, is gane to wreck!
O *Eighty-eight*, in thy sma' space
What dire events ha'e taken place!
Of what enjoyments thou hast reft us!
In what a pickle thou hast left us!

The Spanish empire's tint a head,
An' my auld teethless Bawtie's dead;
The tulzie's sair 'tween Pitt an' Fox,
And 'tween our Maggie's twa wee cocks;
The tane is game, a bluddie devil,
But to the hen-birds unco civil;
The tither's something dour o' treadin,
But better stuff ne'er claw'd a midden.

Ye ministers, come mount the poupit,
An' cry till ye be haerse an' roupet,
For *Eighty-eight*, he wish'd you weel,
An' gied you a' baith gear an' meal;
E'en mony a plack, and mony a peck,
Ye ken yourselves, for little feck!

Ye bonnie lasses, dight your e'en,
For some o' you ha'e tint a frien';
In *Eighty-eight*, ye ken, was ta'en
What ye'll ne'er ha'e to gie again.

Observe the very nowt an' sheep,
How dowf and daviely they creep;
Nay, even the yirth itsel does cry,
For E'nbrugh wells are grutten dry.

O *Eighty-nine*, thou's but a bairn,
An' no o'er auld, I hope, to learn!

---

* The word *wintle* denotes sudden and involuntary motion. In the ludicrous sense in which it is here applied, it may be admirably translated, by the vulgar London expression, of *dancing upon nothing*.

† The first thought of this poem seems to have been suggested by *Falstaff's* account of his ragged recruits passing through Coventry.

" I'll not march through Coventry with them, that's flat!"

* It is almost needless to observe, that the song of *Robin Adair* begins thus:—

You're welcome to Paxton, Robin Adair;
You're welcome to Paxton, Robin Adair.
How does Johnny Mackerell do?
Ay, and Luke Gardener too?
Why did they not come along with you, Robin Adair?

† *A towmont*—a twelvemonth.

Thou beardless boy, I pray tak care,
Thou now hast got thy daddy's chair,
Nae hand-cuff'd, mizl'd, hap-shackl'd *regent*,
But, like himsel, a full free agent.
Be sure ye follow out the plan
Nae waur than he did, honest man!
As muckle better as you can.
January 1, 1789.

—

VERSES,

Written under the portrait of Fergusson, the poet, in a copy of that author's works presented to a young Lady in Edinburgh, March 19th, 1787.

Curse on ungrateful man, that can be pleas'd,
And yet can starve the author of the pleasure!
O thou, my elder brother in misfortune,
By far my elder brother in the muses,
With tears I pity thy unhappy fate!
Why is the bard unpitied by the world,
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures *?

* This apostrophe to Fergusson, bears a striking affinity to one in Burns's poems. See p. 274.

O Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye E'nbrugh gentry!
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry!

This was written before Burns visited the Scottish capital. Even without a poet's susceptibility we may feel how the prophetic parallel of Fergusson's case with his own must have pressed on the memory of our bard, when he paid his second tribute of affection to his *elder brother* in misfortune.
E.

SONGS AND BALLADS.

SONGS, &c.

EVAN BANKS.

Slow spreads the gloom my soul desires,
The sun from India's shore retires;
To Evan Banks, with temperate ray,
Home of my youth, he leads the day.
Oh banks to me for ever dear!
Oh streams whose murmurs still I hear!
All, all my hopes of bliss reside
Where Evan mingles with the Clyde.

And she, in simple beauty drest,
Whose image lives within my breast;
Who trembling heard my parting sigh,
And long pursued me with her eye;
Does she, with heart unchang'd as mine,
Oft in the vocal bowers recline?
Or where yon grot o'erhangs the tide,
Muse while the Evan seeks the Clyde?

Ye lofty banks that Evan bound!
Ye lavish woods that wave around,
And o'er the stream your shadows throw,
Which sweetly winds so far below!
What secret charm to mem'ry brings
All that on Evan's border springs;
Sweet banks! ye bloom by Mary's side;
Blest stream! she views thee haste to Clyde.

Can all the wealth of India's coast
Atone for years in absence lost?
Return, ye moments of delight,
With richer treasures bless my sight!
Swift from this desert let me part,
And fly to meet a kindred heart!
Nor more may ought my steps divide
From that dear stream which flows to Clyde.

SONG.

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.
Who shall say that fortune grieves him
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy:
But to see her, was to love her;
Love but her, and love for ever.
Had we never lov'd sae kindly,
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

SONG.

Patriotic—*unfinished.*

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa;
And wha winna wish gude luck to our cause,
May never gude luck be their fa'*!
It's gude to be merry and wise,
It's gude to be honest and true,
It's gude to support Caledonia's cause,
And bide by the buff and the blue.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa;
Here's a health to Charlie, the chief o' the clan,
Altho' that his band be sma'.
May liberty meet wi' success!
May prudence protect her frae evil!
May tyrants and tyranny tine in the mist,
And wander their way to the devil!

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to Tammie, the Norland laddie,
That lives at the lug o' the law!
Here's freedom to him, that wad read,
Here's freedom to him, that wad write!
There's nane ever fear'd that the truth should be heard,
But they wham the truth wad indite.

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's chieftain M'Leod, a chieftain worth gowd,
Tho' bred amang mountains o' snaw!

* * * *

SONG.

Now bank an' brae are claith'd in green,
An' scatter'd cowslips sweetly spring,

---

* *Fa'*—lot.

By Girvan's fairy haunted stream
The birdies flit on wanton wing.
To Cassillis' banks when e'ening fa's,
There wi' my Mary let me flee,
There catch her ilka glance of love,
The bonnie blink o' Mary's e'e!

The child wha boasts o' warld's walth,
Is aften laird o' meikle care;
But Mary she is a' my ain,
Ah, fortune canna gie me mair!
Then let me range by Cassillis' banks,
Wi' her the lassie dear to me,
And catch her ilka glance o' love,
The bonnie blink o' Mary's e'e!

THE BONNIE LAD THAT'S FAR AWA.

O how can I be blythe and glad,
Or how can I gang brisk and braw,
When the bonnie lad that I lo'e best
Is o'er the hills and far awa?

It's no the frosty winter wind,
It's no the driving drift and snaw;
But aye the tear comes in my e'e,
To think on him that's far awa.

My ather pat me frae his door,
My friends they hae disown'd me a';
But I hae ane will tak my part,
The bonnie lad that's far awa.

A pair o' gloves he gave to me,
And silken snoods* he gave me twa;
And I will wear them for his sake,
The bonnie lad that's far awa.

The weary winter soon will pass,
And spring will cleed the birken-shaw;
And my sweet babie will be born,
And he'll come hame that's far awa†.

SONG‡.

Out over the Forth I look to the north,
But what is the north and its Highlands to me?
The south nor the east gie ease to my breast,
The far foreign land, or the wild rolling sea.

But I look to the west, when I gae to rest,
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be;
For far in the west lives he I lo'e best,
The lad that is dear to my babie and me.

LINES ON A PLOUGHMAN.

As I was a wandering ae morning in spring,
I heard a young ploughman sae sweetly to sing,
And as he was singin' thir words he did say,
There's nae life like the ploughman in the month o' sweet May.
The lav'rock in the morning she'll rise frae her nest,
And mount to the air wi' the dew on her breast*,
And wi' the merry ploughman she'll whistle and sing,
And at night she'll return to her nest back again.

I'LL AYE CA' IN BY YON TOWN.

I'll aye ca' in by yon town,
And by yon garden green, again;
I'll aye ca' in by yon town,
And see my bonnie Jean again.

There's nane sall ken, there's nane sall guess,
What brings me back the gate again,
But she my fairest, faithfu' lass,
And stownlins† we sall meet again.

She'll wander by the aiken tree,
When trystin-time‡ draws near again;
And when her lovely form I see,
O haith, she's doubly dear again!

WHISTLE O'ER THE LAVE O'T.

First when Maggy was my care,
Heaven, I thought, was in her air;
Now we're married—spier nae mair—
Whistle o'er the lave o't.

---

* Ribbands for binding the hair.

† I have heard the country girls, in the Merse and Teviotdale, sing a song, the first stanza of which greatly resembles the opening of this.

O how can I be blythe or glad,
Or in my mind contented be,
When he's far aff that I love best,
And banish'd frae my company. E.

‡ Of this exquisite ballad the last verse only is printed in Dr. Currie's edition.—He did not know that the opening stanza existed.

* It is pleasing to mark those touches of sympathy which show the sons of genius to be of one kindred.—In the following passage, from the poem of his countryman, the same figure is illustrated with characteristic simplicity; and never were the tender and the sublime of poetry more happily united, nor a more affectionate tribute paid to the memory of Burns.

——" Thou, simple bird,
Of all the vocal quire, dwell'st in a home
The humblest; yet thy morning song ascends
Nearest to Heaven;—sweet emblem of his song*,
Who sung thee wakening by the daisy's side!
Grahame's Birds of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 4.

† *Stownlins*—By stealth.

‡ *Trystin-time*—The time of appointment.

* Burns.

Meg was meek, and Meg was mild,
Bonnie Meg was nature's child—
—Wiser men than me's beguil'd;
Whistle o'er the lave o't.

How we live, my Meg and me,
How we love, and how we 'gree,
I care na by how few may see;
Whistle o'er the lave o't.

Wha I wish were maggot's meat,
Dish'd up in her winding sheet,
I could write—but Meg maun see't—
Whistle o'er the lave o't.

YOUNG JOCKEY.

Young Jockey was the blythest lad
In a' our town or here awa;
Fu' blythe he whistled at the gaud*,
Fu' lightly danc'd he in the ha'!
He roos'd my e'en sae bonnie blue,
He roos'd my waist sae genty sma;
An' aye my heart came to my mou,
When ne'er a body heard or saw.

My Jockey toils upon the plain,
Thro' wind and weet, thro' frost and snaw;
And o'er the lee I leuk fu' fain
When Jockey's owsen hameward ca'.
An' aye the night comes round again,
When in his arms he taks me a';
An' aye he vows he'll be my ain
As lang's he has breath to draw.

M'PHERSON'S FAREWEL.

Farewel ye dungeons, dark and strong,
The wretch's destinie!
M'Pherson's time will not be long,
On yonder gallows tree.

Sae rantingly, sae wantonly,
Sae dauntingly gaed he;
He play'd a spring and danc'd it round,
Below the gallows tree.

Oh, what is death but parting breath?—
On mony a bloody plain
I've dar'd his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again!
Sae rantingly, &c.

Untie these bands from off my hands†,
And bring to me my sword;
And there's no a man in all Scotland,
But I'll brave him at a word.
Sae rantingly, &c.

I've liv'd a life of sturt and strife;
I die by treacherie:
It burns my heart I must depart,
And not avenged be.
Sae rantingly, &c.

Now farewel light, thou sunshine bright,
And all beneath the sky!
May coward shame distain his name,
The wretch that dares not die!
Sae rantingly, &c.

SONG.

Here's a bottle and an honest friend!
What wad ye wish for mair, man?
Wha kens, before his life may end,
What his share may be of care, man?
Then catch the moments as they fly,
And use them as ye ought, man:—
Believe me, happiness is shy,
And comes not aye when sought, man.

SONG.

Tune—Braes o' Balquhidder.

I kiss thee yet, yet,
An' I'll kiss thee o'er again,
An' I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
My bonnie Peggy Alison!

Ilk care and fear, when thou art near,
I ever mair defy them, O;
Young kings upon their hansel throne
Are no sae blest as I am, O!
I'll kiss thee, &c.

When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure, O;
I seek nae mair o' Heaven to share,
Than sic a moment's pleasure, O!
I'll kiss thee, &c.

And by thy e'en sae bonnie blue,
I swear I'm thine for ever, O!—
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never, O!
I'll kiss thee, &c.

SONG*.

Tune—If he be a Butcher neat and trim.

On Cessnock banks there lives a lass,
Could I describe her shape and mien;
The graces of her weelfar'd face,
And the glancin' of her sparklin' e'en.

---

* *The gaud*—at the plough.

† See the 2d verse of the ballad of *Hughie Graham*, p. 397.

* This song was an early production. It was recovered by the editor from the oral communication of a lady residing at Glasgow, whom the bard in early life affectionately admired.

She's fresher than the morning dawn
When rising Phœbus first is seen,
When dewdrops twinkle o'er the lawn;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

She's stately like yon youthful ash,
That grows the cowslip braes between,
And shoots its head above each bush;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

She's spotless as the flow'ring thorn
With flow'rs so white and leaves so green,
When purest in the dewy morn;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

Her looks are like the sportive lamb,
When flow'ry May adorns the scene,
That wantons round its bleating dam;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

Her hair is like the curling mist
That shades the mountain side at e'en,
When flow'r-reviving rains are past;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

Her forehead's like the show'ry bow,
When shining sunbeams intervene,
And gild the distant mountains' brow;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

Her voice is like the ev'ning thrush
That sings in Cessnock banks unseen,
While his mate sits nestling in the bush;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

Her lips are like the cherries ripe,
That sunny walls from boreas screen,
They tempt the taste and charm the sight;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,
With fleeces newly washen clean,
That slowly mount the rising steep;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

Her breath is like the fragrant breeze
That gently stirs the blossom'd bean,
When Phœbus sinks behind the seas;
An' she's twa glancin' sparklin' e'en.

But it's not her air, her form, her face,
Tho' matching beauty's fabled queen,
But the mind that shines in every grace,
And chiefly in her sparklin' e'en.

WAE IS MY HEART.

Wae is my heart, and the tear's in my e'e;
Lang, lang joy's been a stranger to me:
Forsaken and friendless my burden I bear,
And the sweet voice o' pity ne'er sounds in my ear.

Love, thou hast pleasures; and deep hae I loved:
Love, thou hast sorrows; and sair hae I proved:
But this bruised heart that now bleeds in my breast,
I can feel by its throbbings will soon be at rest.

O if I were, where happy I hae been;
Down by yon stream and yon bonnie castle green:
For there he is wand'ring and musing on me,
Wha wad soon dry the tear frae his Phillis's e'e.

FRAGMENT.

Her flowing locks, the raven's wing,
Adown her neck and bosom hing;
How sweet unto that breast to cling,
And round that neck entwine her!

Her lips are roses wat wi' dew,
O, what a feast, her bonnie mou!
Her cheeks a mair celestial hue,
A crimson still diviner.

BALLAD.

To thee, lov'd Nith, thy gladsome plains,
Where late wi' careless thought I rang'd,
Though prest wi' care and sunk in woe,
To thee I bring a heart unchang'd.—

I love thee, Nith, thy banks and braes,
Tho' mem'ry there my bosom tear;
For there he rov'd that brake my heart,
Yet to that heart, ah, still how dear!

FRAGMENT.

The winter it is past, and the simmer comes at last,
And the small birds sing on every tree;
Now every thing is glad while I am very sad,
Since my true love is parted from me.

The rose upon the brier by the waters running clear,
May have charms for the linnet or bee;
Their little loves are blest, and their little hearts at rest,
But my true love is parted from me.

SONG.

Tune—Banks of Banna.

Yestreen I had a pint o' wine,
A place where body saw na';
Yestreen lay on this breast o' mine
The gowden locks of Anna.
The hungry Jew in wilderness,
Rejoicing o'er his manna,
Was naething to my hinny bliss
Upon the lips of Anna.

Ye monarchs, tak the east and west,
Frae Indus to Savannah!
Gie me within my straining grasp
The melting form of Anna.

There I'll despise imperial charms,
An empress or sultana,
While dying raptures in her arms
I give and take with Anna!

Awa thou flaunting god o' day!
Awa thou pale Diana!
Ilk star gae hide thy twinkling ray
When I'm to meet my Anna.
Come, in thy raven plumage, night,
Sun, moon, and stars withdraw a';
And bring an angel pen to write
My transports wi' my Anna!

SONG*.

The Deil cam fiddling thro' the town,
And danc'd awa wi' the exciseman;
And ilka wife cry'd, "auld mahoun,
We wish you luck o' he prize, man.

"We'll mak our maut, and brew our drink,
We'll dance, and sing, and rejoice, man;
And mony thanks to the muckle black Deil,
That danc'd awa wi' the exciseman.

"There's threesome reels, and foursome reels,
There's hornpipes and strathspeys, man;
But the ae best dance e'er cam to our lan',
Was—the Deil's awa wi' the exciseman.
"We'll mak our maut, &c."

SONG.

Powers celestial, whose protection
Ever guards the virtuous fair,
While in distant climes I wander,
Let my Mary be your care:
Let her form sae fair and faultless,
Fair and faultless as your own;
Let my Mary's kindred spirit
Draw your choicest influence down.

Make the gales you waft around her
Soft and peaceful as her breast;
Breathing in the breeze that fans her,
Sooth her bosom into rest:
Guardian angels, O protect her,
When in distant lands I roam;
To realms unknown while fate exiles me,
Make her bosom still my home†.

---

* At a meeting of his brother excisemen in Dumfries, Burns, being called upon for a song, handed these verses extempore to the president, written on the back of a letter.

† Probably written on Highland Mary, on the eve of the poet's departure to the West Indies.

HUNTING SONG.

I red you beware at the hunting.

The heather was blooming, the meadows were mawn,
Our lads gaed a hunting, ae day at the dawn,
O'er moors and o'er mosses and mony a glen,
At length they discovered a bonnie moor-hen.

I red you beware at the hunting, young men;
I red you beware at the hunting, young men;
Tak some on the wing, and some as they spring,
But cannily steal on a bonnie moor-hen.

Sweet brushing the dew from the brown heather bells,
Her colours betray'd her on yon mossy fells;
Her plumage out-lustred the pride o' the spring,
And, O! as she wantoned gay on the wing.
I red, &c.

Auld Phœbus himsel, as he peep'd o'er the hill;
In spite at her plumage he tried his skill;
He levell'd his rays where she bask'd on the brae—
His rays were outshone, and but mark'd where she lay.
I red, &c.

They hunted the valley, they hunted the hill;
The best of our lads wi' the best o' their skill;
But still as the fairest she sat in their sight,
Then, whirr! she was over, a mile at a flight.
I red, &c.

* * * *

YOUNG PEGGY.

Young Peggy blooms our bonniest lass,
Her blush is like the morning,
The rosy dawn, the springing grass,
With early gems adorning:
Her eyes outshine the radiant beams
That gild the passing shower,
And glitter o'er the crystal streams,
And cheer each fresh'ning flower.

Her lips more than the cherries bright,
A richer die has grac'd them,
They charm th' admiring gazer's sight,
And sweetly tempt to taste them:
Her smile is as the ev'ning mild,
When feather'd pairs are courting,
And little lambkins wanton wild,
In playful bands disporting.

Were Fortune lovely Peggy's foe,
Such sweetness would relent her,
As blooming spring unbends the brow
Of surly, savage winter.
Detraction's eye no aim can gain
Her winning pow'rs to lessen;
And fretful envy grins in vain,
The poison'd tooth to fasten.

Ye pow'rs of honour, love, and truth,
From ev'ry ill defend her;
Inspire the highly favour'd youth
The destinies intend her:
Still fan the sweet connubial flame
Responsive in each bosom;
And bless the dear parental name
With many a filial blossom*.

SONG.

Tune—The King of France, he rade a Race.

Amang the trees where humming bees
At buds and flowers were hinging, O,
Auld Caledon drew out her drone,
And to her pipe was singing, O;
'Twas pibroch*, sang, strathspey, or reels,
She dirl'd them aff fu' clearly, O,
When there cam a yell o' foreign squeels,
That dang her tapsalteerie, O.—

Their capon craws and queer ha ha's,
They made our lugs grow eerie, O,
The hungry bike did scrape and pipe
'Till we were wae and weary, O;—
But a royal ghast, wha ance was cas'd
A prisoner aughteen year awa,
He fir'd a fiddler in the north,
That dang them tapsalteerie, O.

---

* This was one of the poet's earliest compositions. It is copied from a MS. book, which he had before his first publication.

* *Pibroch*—A Highland war song, adapted to the bagpipe.

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